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*D'Artagnan uttered a Slight Cry of Joy.*

Masterpieces of Fiction

# THE THREE MUSKETEERS

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

*With Illustrations by*

E. ABOT, FÉLIX OUDART, AND EDMUND H. GARRETT

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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# CONTENTS.


| Chapter | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| I. | English and French | 1 |
| II. | A Procurator's Dinner | 11 |
| III. | Soubrette and Mistress | 23 |
| IV. | In which the Outfit of Aramis and Porthos is treated of | 35 |
| V. | All Cats are Gray in the Dark | 46 |
| VI. | Dream of Vengeance | 55 |
| VII. | Milady's Secret | 65 |
| VIII. | How, without incommoding Himself, Athos found his Outfit | 74 |
| IX. | A Vision | 86 |
| X. | A Terrible Vision | 97 |
| XI. | The Siege of Rochelle | 107 |
| XII. | The Anjou Wine | 123 |
| XIII. | The Inn of the Red Dovecot | 133 |
| XIV. | The Utility of Stove-pipes | 143 |
| XV. | A Conjugal Scene | 154 |
| XVI. | The Bastion St. Gervais | 162 |
| XVII. | The Council of the Musketeers | 171 |
| XVIII. | A Family Affair | 192 |
| XIX. | Fatality | 210 |

| Chapter | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| XX. | Chat of a Brother with a Sister | 220 |
| XXI. | Officer | 230 |
| XXII. | The First Day of Captivity | 244 |
| XXIII. | The Second Day of Captivity | 253 |
| XXIV. | The Third Day of Captivity | 262 |
| XXV. | The Fourth Day of Captivity | 273 |
| XXVI. | The Fifth Day of Captivity | 284 |
| XXVII. | Means for Classical Tragedy | 302 |
| XXVIII. | Escape | 311 |
| XXIX. | What took place at Portsmouth Aug. 23, 1628 | 322 |
| XXX. | In France | 335 |
| XXXI. | The Carmelite Convent at Béthune | 342 |
| XXXII. | Two Varieties of Demons | 358 |
| XXXIII. | The Drop of Water | 365 |
| XXXIV. | The Man in the Red Cloak | 383 |
| XXXV. | Judgment | 396 |
| XXXVI. | Execution | 400 |
| XXXVII. | The Cardinal's Messenger | 406 |

# THE THREE MUSKETEERS

## CHAPTER I.

### ENGLISH AND FRENCH.

THE hour having come, they went with their four lackeys to a spot behind the Luxembourg given up to the feeding of goats. Athos threw a piece of money to the goat-keeper to withdraw. The lackeys were ordered to act as sentinels.

A silent party soon drew near to the same enclosure, entered, and joined the musketeers. Then, according to foreign custom, the presentations took place.

The Englishmen were all men of rank; consequently, the odd names of their adversaries were for them not only a matter of surprise, but of annoyance.

"But after all," said Lord de Winter, when the three friends had been named, "we do not know who you are. We cannot fight with such names; they are names of shepherds."

"Therefore your lordship may suppose they are only assumed names," said Athos.

"Which only gives us a greater desire to know the real ones," replied the Englishman.

"You played very willingly with us without knowing

our names," said Athos, "by the same token that you won our horses."

"That is true, but we then only risked our pistoles; this time we risk our blood. One plays with anybody; but one fights only with equals."

"And that is but just," said Athos, and he took aside the one of the four Englishmen with whom he was to fight, and communicated his name in a low voice.

Porthos and Aramis did the same.

"Does that satisfy you?" said Athos to his adversary. "Do you find me of sufficient rank to do me the honor of crossing swords with me?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said the Englishman, bowing.

"Well! now shall I tell you something?" added Athos, coolly.

"What?" replied the Englishman.

"Why, that is, that you would have acted much more wisely if you had not required me to make myself known."

Athos fenced with as much calmness and method as if he had been practising in a fencing-school.

Porthos, abated, no doubt, of his too great confidence by his adventure of Chantilly, played with skill and prudence.

Aramis, who had the third canto of his poem to finish, behaved like a man in haste.

Athos killed his adversary first. He hit him but once, but as he had foretold, that hit was a mortal one; the sword pierced the heart.

Second, Porthos stretched his upon the grass with a wound through his thigh. As the Englishman, without making any further resistance, then surrendered his sword, Porthos took him up in his arms and bore him to his carriage.

Aramis pushed his so vigorously that after going back fifty paces, the man ended by fairly taking to his heels, and disappeared amid the hooting of the lackeys.

As to D'Artagnan, he fought purely and simply on the defensive; and when he saw his adversary pretty well fatigued, with a vigorous side-thrust sent his sword flying. The baron, finding himself disarmed, took two or three steps back, but in this movement his foot slipped, and he fell backwards.

D'Artagnan was over him at a bound, and said to the Englishman, pointing his sword to his throat, "I could kill you, my Lord, you are completely in my hands; but I spare your life for the sake of your sister."

D'Artagnan was at the height of joy; he had realized the plan he had imagined beforehand, whose picturing had produced the smiles we noted upon his face.

The Englishman, delighted at having to do with a gentleman of such a kind disposition, pressed D'Artagnan in his arms, and paid a thousand compliments to the three

musketeers, and as Porthos's adversary was already installed in the carriage, and as Aramis's had taken to his heels, they had nothing to think about but the dead.

As Porthos and Aramis were undressing him, in the hope of finding his wound not mortal, a large purse dropped from his clothes. D'Artagnan picked it up and offered it to Lord de Winter.

"What the devil would you have me do with that?" said the Englishman.

"You can restore it to his family," said D'Artagnan.

"His family will care much about such a trifle as that! His family will inherit fifteen thousand louis a year from him. Keep the purse for your lackeys."

D'Artagnan put the purse into his pocket.

"And now, my young friend, for you will permit me, I hope, to give you that name," said Lord de Winter, "on this very evening, if agreeable to you, I will present you to my sister, Milady Clarik, for I am desirous that she should take you into her good graces; and as she is not

Porthos shrugged his shoulders; Aramis by a movement of his lips endorsed Athos.

"Then," said D'Artagnan, "let us give the money to the lackeys, as Lord de Winter desired us to do."

"Yes," said Athos; "let us give the money to the lackeys, — not to our lackeys, but to the lackeys of the Englishmen."

Athos took the purse, and threw it into the hand of the coachman. "For you and your comrades."

This greatness of spirit in a man who was quite destitute struck even Porthos; and this French generosity, repeated by Lord de Winter and his friend, was highly applauded, except by MM. Grimaud, Bazin, Mousqueton, and Planchet.

Lord de Winter, on quitting D'Artagnan, gave him his sister's address. She lived in the Place Royale, — then the fashionable quarter, — at No. 6, and he undertook to call and take D'Artagnan with him in order to introduce him. D'Artagnan appointed eight o'clock at Athos's residence.

This introduction to Milady Clarik occupied the head of our Gascon greatly. He remembered in what a strange manner this woman had hitherto been mixed up in his destiny. According to his conviction, she was some creature of the cardinal, and yet he felt himself invincibly drawn towards her by one of those sentiments for which we cannot account. His only fear was that Milady would recognize in him the man of Meung and of Dover. Then she knew that he was one of the friends of M. de Tréville, and consequently, that he belonged body and soul to the king; which would make him lose a part of his advantage, since when known to Milady as he knew her, he played only an equal game with her. As to the commencement of an intrigue between her and M. de Wardes, our presumptuous hero gave but little heed to

that, although the marquis was young, handsome, rich, and high in the cardinal's favor. It is not for nothing we are but twenty years old, above all if we were born at Tarbes.

D'Artagnan began by making his most splendid toilet, then returned to Athos's, and according to custom, related everything to him. Athos listened to his projects, then shook his head, and recommended prudence to him with a shade of bitterness.

"What!" said he, "you have just lost one woman, whom you call good, charming, perfect; and here you are, running headlong after another."

D'Artagnan felt the truth of this reproach.

"I loved Madame Bonacieux with my heart, while I only love Milady with my head," said he. "In getting introduced to her, my principal object is to ascertain what part she plays at court."

"The part she plays, *pardieu!* It is not difficult to divine that, after all you have told me. She is some em-

chamber. He therefore found D'Artagnan alone, and as it was nearly eight o'clock, he took the young man with him.

An elegant carriage waited below, and as it was drawn by two excellent horses, they were soon at the Place Royale.

Milady Clarik received D'Artagnan ceremoniously. Her hôtel was remarkably sumptuous, and while the most part of the English had quitted, or were about to quit, France on account of the war, Milady had just been laying out much money upon her residence; which proved that the general measure which drove the English from France did not affect her.

"You see," said Lord de Winter, presenting D'Artagnan to his sister, "a young gentleman who has held my life in his hands, and who has not abused his advantage, although we have been twice enemies, although it was I who insulted him, and although I am an Englishman. Thank him, then, Madame, if you have any affection for me."

Milady frowned slightly; a scarcely visible cloud passed over her brow, and so peculiar a smile appeared upon her lips that the young man, who saw and observed this triple shade, almost shuddered at it.

The brother did not perceive this; he had turned round to play with Milady's favorite monkey, which had pulled him by the doublet.

"You are welcome, Monsieur," said Milady, in a voice whose singular sweetness contrasted with the symptoms of ill-humor which D'Artagnan had just remarked; "you have to-day acquired eternal rights to my gratitude."

The Englishman then turned round and described the combat without omitting a single detail. Milady listened with the greatest attention, and yet it was easily to be perceived, whatever effort she made to conceal her impres-

sions, that this recital was not agreeable to her. The blood rose to her head, and her little foot worked with impatience beneath her robe.

Lord de Winter perceived nothing of this. When he had finished, he went to a table upon which was a salver with Spanish wine and glasses. He filled two glasses, and by a sign invited D'Artagnan to drink.

D'Artagnan knew it was considered disobliging by an Englishman to refuse to pledge him. He therefore drew near to the table and took the second glass. He did not, however, lose sight of Milady, and in a mirror he perceived the change that came over her face. Now that she believed herself to be no longer observed, a sentiment resembling ferocity animated her countenance. She bit her handkerchief with her beautiful teeth.

That pretty little *soubrette* whom D'Artagnan had already observed then came in. She spoke some words to Lord de Winter in English, who thereupon requested D'Artagnan's permission to retire, excusing himself on

Winter did not marry. All this showed D'Artagnan that there was a veil which concealed something; but he could not yet see under this veil.

In addition to this, after a half-hour's conversation D'Artagnan was convinced that Milady was his compatriot; she spoke French with an elegance and a purity that left no doubt on that head.

D'Artagnan was profuse in gallant speeches and protestations of devotion. To all the simple things which escaped our Gascon, Milady replied with a smile of kindness. The hour came for him to retire. D'Artagnan took leave of Milady, and left the saloon the happiest of men.

On the staircase he met the pretty *soubrette*, who brushed gently against him as she passed, and then, blushing to the eyes, asked his pardon for having touched him in a voice so sweet that the pardon was granted instantly.

D'Artagnan came again on the morrow, and was still better received than on the evening before. Lord de Winter was not at home; and it was Milady who this time did all the honors of the evening. She appeared to take a great interest in him, asked him whence he came, who were his friends, and whether he had not some times thought of attaching himself to the cardinal.

D'Artagnan, who, as we have said, was exceedingly prudent for a young man of twenty, then remembered his suspicions regarding Milady. He launched into a eulogy of his Eminence, and said that he should not have failed to enter into the Guards of the cardinal instead of the king's Guards, if he had happened to know M. de Cavois instead of M. de Tréville.

Milady changed the conversation without any appearance of affectation, and asked D'Artagnan in the most careless manner possible if he had ever been in England.

D'Artagnan replied that he had been sent thither by M. de Tréville to treat for a supply of horses, and that he had brought back four as specimens.

Milady in the course of the conversation twice or thrice bit her lips; she had to deal with a Gascon who played close.

At the same hour as on the preceding evening, D'Artagnan retired. In the corridor he again met the pretty Kitty; that was the name of the *soubrette*. She looked at him with an expression of kindness which it was impossible to mistake; but D'Artagnan was so preoccupied by the mistress that he noticed absolutely nothing but her.

D'Artagnan came again on the morrow and the day after that, and each day Milady gave him a more gracious reception.

Every evening, either in the antechamber, the corridor, or on the stairs, he met the pretty *soubrette*. But, as we have said, D'Artagnan paid no attention to this persistence

## CHAPTER II.

### A PROCURATOR'S DINNER.

However brilliant had been the part played by Porthos in the duel, it had not made him forget the dinner of the procurator's wife.

On the morrow he received the last touches of Mousqueton's brush for an hour, and took his way towards the Rue aux Ours with the step of a man who was doubly in favor with fortune.

His heart beat, but not like D'Artagnan's, with a young and impatient love. No; a more material interest stirred his blood. He was about at last to pass that mysterious threshold, to climb those unknown stairs by which, one by one, the old crowns of M. Coquenard had ascended. He was about to see in reality a certain coffer of which he had twenty times beheld the image in his dreams, — a coffer long and deep, locked, bolted, fastened in the wall; a coffer of which he had so often heard, and which the hands — a little wrinkled, it is true, but still not without elegance — of the procurator's wife were about to open to his admiring looks.

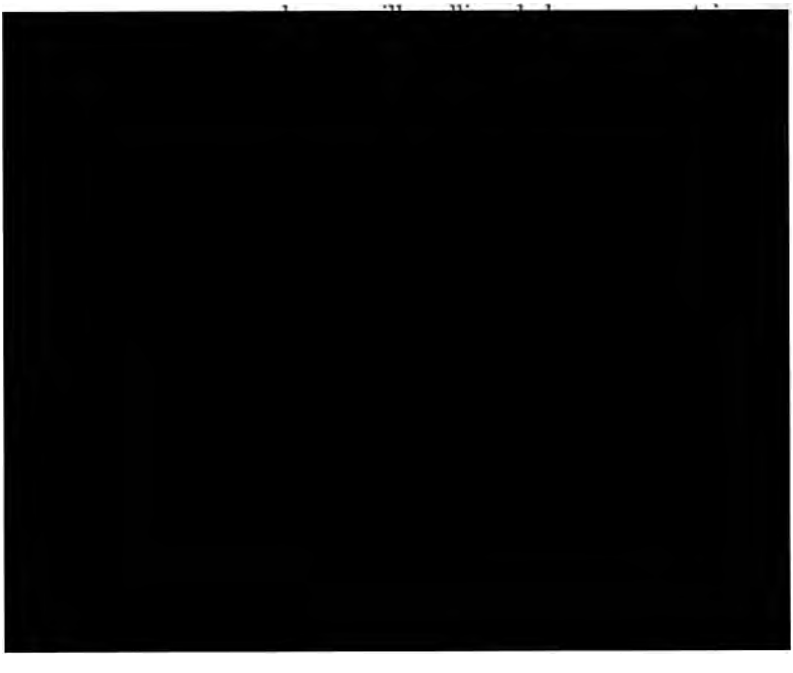
And then he, — a wanderer on the earth, a man without fortune, a man without family, a soldier accustomed to inns, cabarets, taverns, and restaurants, a lover of wine forced to depend upon chance treats, — he was about to partake of family meals, to enjoy the pleasures of a comfortable establishment, and to give himself up to those

little attentions which "the harder one is, the more they please," as old soldiers say.

To come in the capacity of a cousin, and seat himself every day at a good table; to smooth the yellow, wrinkled brow of the old procurator; to pluck the clerks a little by teaching them *bassette, passe-dix*, and *lansquenet*, in their utmost nicety, and winning from them, by way of fee for the lesson he would give them in an hour, their savings of a month, — all this was enormously delightful to Porthos.

The musketeer could not forget the evil reports which then prevailed, and which indeed have survived them, of the procurators of the period, — meanness, stinginess, fasts; but as, after all, excepting some few acts of economy which Porthos had always found very unseasonable, the procurator's wife had been tolerably liberal, — that is, be it understood, for a procurator's wife, — he hoped to see a household of a highly comfortable kind.

And yet, at the very door, the musketeer began to entertain some doubts. The approach was not such as to



Although the musketeer was not expected before one o'clock, the procurator's wife had been on the watch ever since mid-day, reckoning that the heart, or perhaps the stomach, of her lover would bring him before his time.

Madame Coquenard therefore entered the office from the house at the same moment her guest entered from the stairs, and the appearance of the worthy lady relieved him from an awkward embarrassment. The clerks surveyed him with great curiosity, and he, not knowing well what to say to this ascending and descending scale, remained tongue-tied.

"It is my cousin!" cried the procurator's wife. "Come in, come in, M. Porthos!"

The name of Porthos produced its effect upon the clerks, who began to laugh; but Porthos turned sharply round, and every countenance quickly recovered its gravity.

They reached the office of the procurator after having passed through the antechamber in which the clerks were, and the study in which they ought to have been. This last apartment was a sort of dark room, littered with papers. On quitting the study they left the kitchen on the right, and entered the reception-room.

All these rooms, which communicated with one another, did not inspire Porthos favorably. Words might be heard at a distance through all these open doors. Then, while passing, he had cast a rapid, investigating glance into the kitchen; and he was obliged to confess to himself, to the shame of the procurator's wife and his own regret, that he did not see that fire, that animation, that bustle, which when a good repast is on foot prevails generally in that sanctuary of good living.

The procurator had without doubt been warned of his visit, as he expressed no surprise at the sight of Porthos,

who advanced towards him with a sufficiently easy air, and saluted him courteously.

"We are cousins, it appears, M. Porthos?" said the procurator, rising, yet supporting his weight upon the arms of his cane-chair.

The old man, wrapped in a large black doublet, in which the whole of his slender body was concealed, was brisk and dry. His little gray eyes shone like carbuncles, and appeared, with his grinning mouth, to be the only part of his face in which life survived. Unfortunately, the legs began to refuse their service to this bony machine. During the last five or six months that this weakness had been felt, the worthy procurator had nearly become the slave of his wife.

The cousin was received with resignation, that was all. M. Coquenard, firm upon his legs, would have declined all relationship with M. Porthos.

"Yes, Monsieur, we are cousins," said Porthos, without being disconcerted, as he had never reckoned upon being

M. Coquenard did not carry his genealogical investigations any further; but withdrawing his anxious look from the chest, and fixing it upon Porthos, he contented himself with saying, "Monsieur our cousin will do us the favor of dining with us once before his departure for the campaign, will he not, Madame Coquenard?"

This time Porthos received the blow right in his stomach, and felt it. It appeared likewise that Madame Coquenard was not less affected by it on her part, for she added, "My cousin will not return if he finds that we do not treat him kindly; but otherwise he has so little time to pass in Paris, and consequently to spare to us that we must entreat him to give us every instant he can call his own previously to his departure."

"Oh, my legs, my poor legs! where are you?" murmured Coquenard, and he tried to smile.

This succor, which came to Porthos at the moment in which he was attacked in his gastronomic hopes, inspired much gratitude in the musketeer towards the procurator's wife.

The hour of dinner soon arrived. They passed into the eating-room, — a large dark room situated opposite the kitchen.

The clerks who, as it appeared, had smelt unusual perfumes in the house, were of military punctuality, and held their stools in hand quite ready to sit down. Their jaws moved preliminarily with fearful threatenings.

"Indeed!" thought Porthos, casting a glance at the three hungry clerks, — for the errand-boy, as might be expected, was not admitted to the honors of the magisterial table, — "in my cousin's place, I would not keep such gormands! They look like shipwrecked sailors who have not eaten for six weeks."

M. Coquenard entered, pushed along upon his armchair

with castors by Madame Coquenard, whom Porthos assisted in rolling her husband up to the table.

He had scarcely entered when he began to agitate his nose and his jaws after the example of his clerks.

"Oh, oh!" said he; "here is a soup which is rather inviting."

"What the devil can they smell so extraordinary in this soup?" said Porthos, at the sight of a pale liquid, abundant, but entirely free from meat, on the surface of which a few crusts swam about as rare as the islands of an archipelago.

Madame Coquenard smiled, and upon a sign from her every one eagerly took his seat.

M. Coquenard was served first, then Porthos. Afterwards Madame Coquenard filled her own plate, and distributed the crusts without soup to the impatient clerks. At this moment the door of the dining-room unclosed with a creak, and Porthos perceived through the half-open flap the little clerk who, not being allowed to take part in the feast, ate his dry bread in the passage with the

"The devil!" thought Porthos, "this is poor work. I respect old age, but I don't much like it boiled or roasted."

And he looked round to see if anybody partook of his opinion; but on the contrary, he saw nothing but eager eyes which were devouring, in anticipation, that sublime fowl which was the object of his contempt.

Madame Coquenard drew the dish towards her, skilfully detached the two great black feet, which she placed upon her husband's plate, cut off the neck, which with the head she put on one side for herself, raised the wing for Porthos, and then returned the bird otherwise intact to the servant who had brought it in, who disappeared with it before the musketeer had time to examine the variations which disappointment produces upon faces, according to the characters and temperaments of those who experience it.

In the place of the fowl a dish of haricot beans made its appearance, — an enormous dish in which some bones of mutton that at first sight one might have believed to have some meat on them pretended to show themselves.

But the clerks were not the dupes of this deceit, and their lugubrious looks settled down into resigned countenances.

Madame Coquenard distributed this dish to the young men with the moderation of a good housewife.

The time for wine came. M. Coquenard poured from a very small stone bottle the third of a glass for each of the young men, served himself in about the same proportion, and passed the bottle to Porthos and Madame Coquenard.

The young men filled up their third of a glass with water; then, when they had drunk half the glass, they filled it up again, and continued to do so. This brought them, by the end of the repast, to swallowing a drink

which from the color of the ruby had passed to that of a pale topaz.

Porthos ate his wing of the fowl timidly, and shuddered when he felt the knee of the procurator's wife under the table, as it came in search of his. He also drank half a glass of this sparingly served wine, and found it to be nothing but that horrible Montreuil, — the terror of all expert palates.

M. Coquenard saw him swallowing this wine undiluted, and sighed deeply.

"Will you eat any of these beans, Cousin Porthos?" said Madame Coquenard, in that tone which says, "Take my advice, don't touch them."

"Devil take me if I taste one of them!" murmured Porthos to himself, and then said aloud, "Thank you, my cousin, I am no longer hungry."

There was silence. Porthos could hardly keep his countenance. The procurator repeated several times, "Ah, Madame Coquenard! accept my compliments; your dinner has been a real feast. Lord, how I have eaten!"

The clerks gone, Madame Coquenard rose and took from a buffet a piece of cheese, some preserved quinces, and a cake which she had herself made of almonds and honey.

M. Coquenard knitted his eyebrows because there were too many good things. Porthos bit his lips because he saw not the wherewithal to dine. He looked to see if the dish of beans was still there; the dish of beans had disappeared.

"A positive feast!" cried M. Coquenard, turning about in his chair, "a real feast, *epulæ epulorum*. Lucullus dines with Lucullus."

Porthos looked at the bottle, which was near him, and hoped that with wine, bread, and cheese, he might make a dinner; but wine was wanting, the bottle was empty. Monsieur and Madame Coquenard did not seem to observe it.

"This is fine!" said Porthos to himself; "I am prettily caught!"

He passed his tongue over a spoonful of preserves, and stuck his teeth into the sticky pastry of Madame Coquenard.

"Now," said he, "the sacrifice is consummated! Ah! if I had not the hope of peeping with Madame Coquenard into her husband's chest!"

M. Coquenard, after the luxuries of such a repast, which he called an excess, felt the want of a siesta. Porthos began to hope that the thing would take place at the present sitting, and in that same locality; but the procurator would listen to nothing, he would be taken to his room, and was not satisfied till he was close to his chest, upon the edge of which, for still greater precaution, he placed his feet.

The procurator's wife took Porthos into an adjoining room, and they began to lay the basis of reconciliation.

"You can come and dine three times a week," said Madame Coquenard.

"Thanks, Madame!" said Porthos, "but I don't like to abuse your kindness; besides, I must think of my outfit."

"That 's true," said the procurator's wife, groaning, — "that unfortunate outfit!"

"Alas, yes," said Porthos, "it is so."

"But of what, then, does the equipment of your company consist, M. Porthos?"

"Oh, of many things!" said Porthos. "The Musketeers are, as you know, picked soldiers, and they require many things useless to the Guardsmen or the Swiss."

"But yet, detail them to me."

"Why, they may amount to —" said Porthos, who preferred discussing the total to taking them one by one.

The procurator's wife waited tremblingly.

"To how much?" said she. "I hope it does not exceed —" She stopped; speech failed her.

"Yes, a horse."

"Well, then! I can just suit you."

"Ah!" said Porthos, brightening, "that's well as regards my horse; but I must have the appointments complete, as they include objects which a musketeer alone can purchase, and which will not amount, besides, to more than three hundred livres."

"Three hundred livres? Then put down three hundred livres," said the procurator's wife, with a sigh.

Porthos smiled. It may be remembered that he had the saddle which came from Buckingham. These three hundred livres he reckoned upon putting snugly into his pocket.

"Then," continued he, "there is a horse for my lackey, and my valise. As to my arms, it is useless to trouble you about them; I have them."

"A horse for your lackey?" resumed the procurator's wife, hesitatingly; "but that is doing things in lordly style, my friend."

"Ah, Madame!" said Porthos, haughtily; "do you take me for a beggar?"

"No; I only thought that a pretty mule makes sometimes as good an appearance as a horse, and it seemed to me that by getting a pretty mule for Mousqueton —"

"Well, agreed for a pretty mule," said Porthos; "you are right, I have seen very great Spanish nobles whose whole suite were mounted on mules. But then you understand, Madame Coquenard, a mule with feathers and bells."

"Be satisfied," said the procurator's wife.

"There remains the valise," added Porthos.

"Oh, don't let that disturb you," cried Madame Coquenard. "My husband has five or six valises; you shall choose the best. There is one in particular which he

prefers in his journeys, large enough to hold all the world."

"Your valise is then empty?" asked Porthos, with simplicity.

"Certainly it is empty," replied the procurator's wife, in real innocence.

"Ah, but the valise I want," cried Porthos, "is a well-filled one, my dear."

Madame uttered fresh sighs. Molière had not written his scene in "L'Avare" then. Madame Coquenard was in the dilemma of Harpagon.

Finally, the rest of the equipment was successively debated in the same manner; and the result of the sitting was, that the procurator's wife should give eight hundred livres in money, and should furnish the horse and the mule which should have the honor of carrying Porthos and Mousqueton to glory.

These conditions being agreed to, Porthos took leave of Madame Coquenard. The latter wished to detain him by darting certain tender glances; but Porthos urged the

## CHAPTER III.

### SOUBRETTE AND MISTRESS.

MEANTIME, as we have said, despite the cries of his conscience and the wise counsels of Athos, D'Artagnan became hourly more in love with Milady. Thus he never failed to pay his diurnal court to her; and the self-satisfied Gascon was convinced that sooner or later she could not fail to respond.

One day, when he arrived with his head in the air, and as light at heart as a man who awaits a shower of gold, he found the *soubrette* under the gateway of the hôtel; but this time the pretty Kitty was not contented with touching him as he passed, she took him gently by the hand.

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan, "she is charged with some message for me from her mistress; she is about to appoint some rendezvous of which she had not courage to speak." And he looked down at the pretty girl with the most triumphant air imaginable.

"I wish to say three words to you, Monsieur Chevalier," stammered the *soubrette*.

"Speak, my child, speak," said D'Artagnan; "I listen."

"Here? Impossible! That which I have to say is too long, and above all, too secret."

"Well, what is to be done?"

"If Monsieur Chevalier would follow me?" said Kitty, timidly.

"Where you please, my dear child."

"Come, then."

And Kitty, who had not let go the hand of D'Artagnan, led him up a little dark, winding staircase, and after ascending about fifteen steps, opened a door.

"Come in here, Monsieur Chevalier," said she; "here we shall be alone, and can talk."

"And whose room is this, my dear child?"

"It is mine, Monsieur Chevalier; it communicates with my mistress's by that door. But you need not fear. She will not hear what we say; she never goes to bed before midnight."

D'Artagnan cast a glance around him. The little apartment was charming for its taste and neatness; but in spite of himself, his eyes were directed to that door which Kitty said led to Milady's chamber.

Kitty guessed what was passing in the mind of the young man, and heaved a deep sigh.

"You love my mistress, then, very dearly, Monsieur Chevalier?" said she.

"Oh, more than I can say, Kitty! I am mad for her!"

Kitty breathed a second sigh.

"We have always some difficulty in believing such things, my pretty dear, were it only from self-love."

"Then you don't believe me?"

"I confess that unless you deign to give me some proof of what you advance —"

"What do you think of this?"

Kitty drew a little note from her bosom.

"For me?" said D'Artagnan, seizing the letter.

"No; for another."

"For another?"

"Yes."

"His name; his name!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Read the address."

"M. le Comte de Wardes."

The remembrance of the scene at St. Germain presented itself to the mind of the presumptuous Gascon. As quick as thought he tore open the letter, in spite of the cry which Kitty uttered on seeing what he was going to do, or rather, what he was doing.

"Oh, good Lord, Monsieur Chevalier," said she, "what are you doing?"

"I?" said D'Artagnan; "nothing," and he read, —

"You have not answered my first note. Are you indisposed, or have you forgotten the glances you favored me with at the ball of Madame de Guise? You have an opportunity now, Count; do not allow it to escape."

D'Artagnan became very pale; he was wounded in his *self*-love: he thought that it was in his *love*.

"Poor dear M. d'Artagnan," said Kitty, in a voice full of compassion, and pressing anew the young man's hand.

"You pity me, little one?" said D'Artagnan.

"Oh, yes, and with all my heart; for I know what it is to be in love."

"You know what it is to be in love?" said D'Artagnan, looking at her for the first time with much attention.

"Alas, yes."

"Well, then, instead of pitying me, you would do much better to assist me in avenging myself on your mistress."

"And what sort of revenge would you take?"

"I would triumph over her, and supplant my rival."

"I will never help you in that, Monsieur Chevalier," said Kitty, warmly.

"And why not?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"For two reasons."

"What ones?"

"The first is, that my mistress will never love you."

"How do you know that?"

"You have cut her to the heart."

"I? In what can I have offended her, — I who ever since I have known her have lived at her feet like a slave? Speak, I beg you!"

Kitty, emboldened by the kiss in the first place, and still further by the expression of the eyes of the young man, "is, that in love, every one for herself!"

Then only D'Artagnan remembered the languishing glances of Kitty, her constantly meeting him in the antechamber, the corridor, or on the stairs, those touches of the hand every time she met him, and her deep sighs; but absorbed by his desire to please the great lady, he had disdained the *soubrette*. He whose game is the eagle takes no heed of the sparrow.

But this time our Gascon saw at a glance all the advantage to be derived from the love which Kitty had just confessed so innocently, or so boldly: the interception of letters addressed to the Comte de Wardes, news on the spot, entrance at all hours into Kitty's chamber, which was contiguous to her mistress's. The perfidious deceiver was, as may plainly be perceived, already sacrificing, in intention, the poor girl in order to obtain Milady, willy nilly.

"Well," said he to the young girl, "are you willing, my dear Kitty, that I should give you a proof of that love which you doubt?"

"What love?" asked the young girl.

"Of that which I am ready to feel towards you."

"And what is that proof?"

"Are you willing that I should this evening pass with you the time I generally spend with your mistress?"

"Oh, yes," said Kitty, clapping her hands, "very willing."

"Well, then, come here, my dear," said D'Artagnan, establishing himself in an easy-chair; "come, and let me tell you that you are the prettiest *soubrette* I ever saw!"

And he did tell her so much, and so well, that the poor girl, who asked nothing better than to believe him, did

believe him. Nevertheless, to D'Artagnan's great astonishment, the pretty Kitty defended herself resolutely.

Time passes quickly when it is passed in attacks and defences. Midnight sounded, and almost at the same time the bell was rung in Milady's chamber.

"Good God," cried Kitty, "there is my mistress calling me! Go; go directly!"

D'Artagnan rose, took his hat, as if it had been his intention to obey, then, opening quickly the door of a large closet, instead of that leading to the staircase, he buried himself amid the robes and dressing-gowns of Milady.

"What are you doing?" cried Kitty.

D'Artagnan, who had secured the key, shut himself up in the closet without reply.

"Well," cried Milady, in a sharp voice. "Are you asleep, that you don't answer when I ring?"

And D'Artagnan heard the door of communication opened violently.

"Here am I, Milady, here am I!" cried Kitty, springing forward to meet her mistress.

something between that man and me that he is quite ignorant of: he nearly made me lose my credit with his Eminence. Oh, I will be revenged!"

"I believed that Madame loved him."

"I love him? I detest him! An idiot, who held the life of Lord de Winter in his hands and did not kill him, by which I missed three hundred thousand livres' income."

"That's true," said Kitty; "your son was the only heir of his uncle, and until his majority you would have had the enjoyment of his fortune."

D'Artagnan shuddered to the marrow at hearing this suave creature reproach him, with that sharp voice which she took such pains to conceal in conversation, for not having killed a man whom he had seen load her with kindnesses.

"For all this," continued Milady, "I should long ago have revenged myself on him, if, and I don't know why, the cardinal had not requested me to conciliate him."

"Oh, yes; but Madame has not conciliated that little woman he was so fond of."

"What, the mercer's wife of the Rue des Fossoyeurs? Has he not already forgotten she ever existed? Fine vengeance that, on my faith!"

A cold sweat broke from D'Artagnan's brow. Why, this woman was a monster! He resumed his listening, but unfortunately the toilet was finished.

"That will do," said Milady; "go into your own room, and to-morrow endeavor again to get me an answer to the letter I gave you."

"For M. de Wardes?" said Kitty.

"To be sure; for M. de Wardes."

"Now, there is one," said Kitty, "who appears to me quite a different sort of a man from that poor M. d'Artagnan."

"Go to bed, Mademoiselle," said Milady; "I don't like comments."

D'Artagnan heard the door close; then the noise of two bolts by which Milady fastened herself in. On her side, but as softly as possible, Kitty turned the key of the lock, and then D'Artagnan opened the closet door.

"Oh, good Lord!" said Kitty, in a low voice, "what is the matter with you? How pale you are!"

"The abominable creature!" murmured D'Artagnan.

"Silence, silence, begone!" said Kitty. "There is nothing but a wainscot between my chamber and Milady's; every word that is uttered in one can be heard in the other."

"That 's exactly the reason I won't go," said D'Artagnan.

"What!" said Kitty, blushing.

"Or, at least, I will go — later."

He drew Kitty to him. She had the less motive to resist, resistance would make so much noise. Therefore Kitty surrendered.

It was a movement of vengeance upon Milady. D'Ar-

was. As he had seen Milady on board a vessel at the moment he was leaving England, he suspected that it was, almost without a doubt, on account of the diamond studs.

But what was clearest in all this was, that the true hatred, the profound hatred, the inveterate hatred of Milady, was increased by his not having killed her brother-in-law.

D'Artagnan came the next day to Milady's, and finding her in a very ill-humor, had no doubt that it was lack of an answer from M. de Wardes that provoked her thus. Kitty came in, but Milady was very cross with her. The poor girl ventured a glance at D'Artagnan which said, "See how I suffer on your account!"

Towards the end of the evening, however, the beautiful lioness became milder; she smilingly listened to the soft speeches of D'Artagnan, and even gave him her hand to kiss.

D'Artagnan departed, scarcely knowing what to think; but as he was a youth who did not easily lose his head, while continuing to pay his court to Milady, he had framed a little plan in his mind.

He found Kitty at the gate, and, as on the preceding evening, went up to her chamber. Kitty had been accused of negligence, and severely scolded. Milady could not at all comprehend the silence of the Comte de Wardes, and she ordered Kitty to come at nine o'clock in the morning to take a third letter.

D'Artagnan made Kitty promise to bring him that letter on the following morning. The poor girl promised all her lover desired; she was mad.

Things passed as on the night before. D'Artagnan concealed himself in his closet; Milady called, undressed, sent away Kitty, and shut the door. As the night before, D'Artagnan did not return home till five o'clock in the morning.

At eleven o'clock Kitty came to him. She held in her hand a fresh billet from Milady. This time the poor girl did not even argue with D'Artagnan; she gave it to him at once. She belonged body and soul to her handsome soldier.

D'Artagnan opened the letter and read as follows: —

"This is the third time I have written to you to tell you that I love you. Beware that I do not write to you a fourth time to tell you that I detest you.

"If you repent of the manner in which you have acted towards me, the young girl who brings you this will tell you how a man of spirit may obtain his pardon."

D'Artagnan colored and grew pale several times in reading this billet.

"Oh, you love her still," said Kitty, who had not taken her eyes off the young man's countenance for an instant.

"No, Kitty, you are mistaken. I do not love her, but I will avenge myself for her contempt."

"Oh, yes, I know what sort of vengeance! You told

of spirit may obtain his pardon. I will come and ask mine at eleven o'clock this evening.

To delay it a single day would be in my eyes now to commit a fresh offence.

From him whom you have rendered the happiest of men,

COMTE DE WARDES.

This note was in the first place a forgery; it was likewise an indelicacy. It was even, according to our present manners, something like an infamous action; but at that period people did not manage affairs as they do to-day. Besides, D'Artagnan from her own admission knew Milady culpable of treachery in matters more important, and could entertain no respect for her. And yet, notwithstanding this want of respect, he felt an uncontrollable passion for this woman boiling in his veins, — passion drunk with contempt; but passion or thirst, as the reader pleases.

D'Artagnan's plan was very simple. By Kitty's chamber he could gain that of her mistress. He would take advantage of the first moment of surprise, shame, and terror, to triumph over her. He might fail, but something must be left to chance. In eight days the campaign would open, and he would be compelled to leave Paris; D'Artagnan had no time for a prolonged love siege.

"There," said the young man, handing Kitty the letter sealed; "give that to Milady. It is the count's reply."

Poor Kitty became as pale as death; she suspected what the letter contained.

"Listen, my dear girl," said D'Artagnan; "you cannot but perceive that all this must end, some way or other. Milady may discover that you gave the first billet to my lackey instead of to the count's; that it is I who have opened the others which ought to have been opened by De Wardes. Milady will then turn you out of doors,

and you know she is not the woman to limit her vengeance."

"Alas!" said Kitty, "for whom have I exposed myself to all that?"

"For me, I well know, my sweet girl," said D'Artagnan. "But I am grateful, I swear to you."

"But what does this note contain?"

"Milady will tell you."

"Ah, you do not love me!" cried Kitty, "and I am very wretched."

To this reproach there is always one response which deludes women. D'Artagnan replied in such a manner that Kitty remained in her great delusion. Although she cried freely before deciding to transmit the letter to her mistress, she did at last so decide, which was all D'Artagnan wished. Finally he promised that he would leave her mistress's presence at an early hour that evening, and that when he left the mistress he would ascend with the maid. This promise completed poor Kitty's consolation.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN WHICH THE OUTFIT OF ARAMIS AND PORTHOS IS TREATED OF.

Since the four friends had been each in search of his equipments, there had been no fixed meeting between them. They dined apart from one another, wherever they might happen to be, or rather where they could. Duty likewise, on its part took a portion of that precious time which was gliding away so rapidly,—only they had agreed to meet once a week, about one o'clock, at the residence of Athos, seeing that he, in agreement with the vow he had formed, did not pass over the threshold of his door.

This day of reunion was the same day as that on which Kitty came to find D'Artagnan. Soon as Kitty left him, D'Artagnan directed his steps towards the Rue Férou.

He found Athos and Aramis philosophizing. Aramis had some slight inclination to resume the cassock. Athos, according to his system, neither encouraged nor dissuaded him. Athos believed that every one should be left to his own free will. He never gave advice but when it was asked, and even then he required to be asked twice.

"People in general," he said, "only ask advice not to follow it; or if they do follow it, it is for the sake of having some one to blame for having given it."

Porthos arrived a minute after D'Artagnan. The four friends were reunited.

The four countenances expressed four different feelings:

that of Porthos, tranquillity; that of D'Artagnan, hope; that of Aramis, uneasiness; that of Athos, carelessness.

At the end of a moment's conversation, in which Porthos hinted that a lady of elevated rank had condescended to relieve him from his embarrassment, Mousqueton entered. He came to request his master to return to his lodgings, where his presence was urgent, as he piteously said.

"Is it my equipment?"

"Yes and no," replied Mousqueton.

"Well, but can't you speak?"

"Come, Monsieur."

Porthos rose, saluted his friends, and followed Mousqueton.

An instant after, Bazin made his appearance at the door.

"What do you want with me, my friend?" said Aramis, with that mildness of language which was observable in him every time that his ideas were directed towards the Church.

[redacted]

"I believe these fellows have managed their business. What do you think, D'Artagnan?" said Athos.

"I know that Porthos was in a fair way," replied D'Artagnan; "and as to Aramis, to tell you the truth, I have never been seriously uneasy on his account. But you, my dear Athos, — you, who so generously distributed the Englishman's pistoles, which were your legitimate property, — what do you mean to do?"

"I am satisfied with having killed that fellow, my boy, seeing that it is blessed bread to kill an Englishman; but if I had pocketed his pistoles, they would have weighed me down like a remorse."

"Go to, my dear Athos; you have truly inconceivable ideas."

"Let it pass. What do you think of M. de Tréville telling me, when he did me the honor to call upon me yesterday, that you associated with the suspected English, whom the cardinal protects?"

"That is to say, I visit an Englishwoman, — the one I named to you."

"Oh, ay! the fair woman on whose account I gave you advice, which naturally you took care not to adopt."

"I gave you my reasons."

"Yes; you look there for your outfit, I think you said."

"Not at all. I have acquired a certain knowledge that that woman was concerned in the abduction of Madame Bonacieux."

"Yes, I understand now: to find one woman, you court another. It is the longest road, but certainly the most amusing."

D'Artagnan was on the point of telling Athos all; but one consideration restrained him. Athos was a gentleman, punctilious in points of honor; and there were in the plan which our lover had devised for Milady, he was

sure, certain things that would not obtain the assent of this Puritan. He was therefore silent; and as Athos was the least inquisitive of any man on earth, D'Artagnan's confidence stopped there. We will therefore leave the two friends, who had nothing important to say to each other, and follow Aramis.

Upon being informed that the person who wanted to speak to him came from Tours, we have seen with what rapidity the young man followed, or rather went before, Bazin; he ran without stopping from the Rue Férou to the Rue de Vaugirard. On entering he found a man of short stature and intelligent eyes, but covered with rags.

"You have asked for me?" said the musketeer.

"I wish to speak with M. Aramis. Is that your name, Monsieur?"

"My very own. You have brought me something?"

"Yes, if you show me a certain embroidered handkerchief."

"Here it is," said Aramis, taking a small key from his breast and opening a little ebony box inlaid with mother-

Aramis uttered a cry of joy at the sight of the seal, kissed the superscription with an almost religious respect, and opened the epistle, which contained what follows : —

My Friend, — It is the will of fate that we should be still for some time separated ; but the delightful days of youth are not lost beyond return. Perform your duty in camp ; I will do mine elsewhere. Accept that which the bearer brings you ; make the campaign like a handsome true gentleman, and think of me, who kiss tenderly your black eyes.

Adieu ; or rather, *au revoir*.

The mendicant continued to rip his garments ; and drew from amid his rags a hundred and fifty Spanish double pistoles, which he laid down on the table ; then he opened the door, bowed, and went out before the young man, stupefied by his letter, had ventured to address a word to him.

Aramis then reperused the letter, and perceived a post-script, —

P. S. You may behave politely to the bearer, who is a count and a grandee of Spain.

"Golden dreams!" cried Aramis. "Oh, beautiful life! Yes, we are young ; yes, we shall yet have happy days ! My love, my blood, my life ! all, all, all, are thine, my adored mistress ! "

And he kissed the letter with passion, without even vouchsafing a look at the gold which sparkled on the table.

Bazin scratched at the door, and as Aramis had no longer any reason to exclude him, he bade him come in.

Bazin was stupefied at the sight of the gold, and forgot that he came to announce D'Artagnan, who, curious to know who the mendicant could be, came to Aramis on leaving Athos.

Now, as D'Artagnan used no ceremony with Aramis, seeing that Bazin forgot to announce him, he announced himself.

"The devil! my dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan, "if these are the prunes that are sent to you from Tours, I beg you will make my compliments to the gardener who gathers them."

"You are mistaken, friend D'Artagnan," said Aramis, always on his guard; "this is from my publisher, who has just sent me the price of that poem in one-syllable verse which I began yonder."

"Ah, indeed," said D'Artagnan. "Well, your publisher is very generous, my dear Aramis, that 's all I can say."

"How, Monsieur?" cried Bazin, "a poem sell so dear as that! It is incredible! Oh, Monsieur, you can write as much as you like; you may become equal to M. de Voiture and M. de Benserade. I like that. A poet is as good as an abbé. Ah! M. Aramis, become a poet, I beg of you."

"Bazin, my friend," said Aramis, "I believe you med-

"My faith!" said D'Artagnan, with great pleasure. "It is long since we have had a good dinner; and I, for my part, have a somewhat hazardous expedition for this evening, and shall not be sorry, I confess, to fortify myself with a few glasses of good old Burgundy."

"Agreed, as to the old Burgundy; I have no objection to that," said Aramis, from whom the letter and the gold had removed, as by magic, his ideas of conversion.

And having put three or four double pistoles into his pocket, to answer the needs of the moment, he placed the others in the ebony box, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, in which was the famous handkerchief which served him as a talisman.

The two friends repaired to Athos, and he, faithful to his vow of not going out, took upon him to order dinner to be brought to them. As he was perfectly acquainted with the details of gastronomy, D'Artagnan and Aramis made no objection to abandoning this important care to him.

They went to find Porthos, and at the corner of the Rue Bac met Mousqueton, who, with a most pitiable air, was driving before him a mule and a horse.

D'Artagnan uttered a cry of surprise, which was not quite free from joy.

"Ah, my yellow horse," cried he. "Aramis, look at that horse!"

"Oh, the frightful brute!" said Aramis.

"Ah, my dear," replied D'Artagnan, "upon that very horse I came to Paris."

"What, does Monsieur know this horse?" said Mousqueton.

"It is of an original color," said Aramis; "I never saw one with such a hide in my life."

"I can well believe it," replied D'Artagnan, "and that

was why I got three crowns for him. It must have been for his hide, for, *certes*, the carcass is not worth eighteen livres. But how did this horse come into your hands, Mousqueton?"

"Pray," said the lackey, "say nothing about it, Monsieur; it is a frightful trick of the husband of our duchess!"

"How is that, Mousqueton?"

"Why, we are looked upon with a rather favorable eye by a lady of quality, the Duchesse de — but, your pardon; my master has commanded me to be discreet. She had forced us to accept a little souvenir, a magnificent Spanish *genet* and an Andalusian mule, which were beautiful to look upon. The husband heard of the affair; on their way he confiscated the two magnificent beasts which were being sent to us, and substituted these horrible animals."

"Which you are taking back to him?" said D'Artagnan.

"Exactly!" replied Mousqueton. "You may well believe that we will not accept such steeds as these in

fore him, he reached the Rue aux Ours. Arrived there, he fastened, according to the orders of his master, both horse and mule to the knocker of the procurator's door; then, without taking any thought for their future, he returned to Porthos, and told him that his commission was completed.

In a short time the two unfortunate beasts, who had not eaten anything since the morning, made such a noise in raising and letting fall the knocker that the procurator ordered his errand-boy to go and inquire in the neighborhood to whom this horse and mule belonged.

Madame Coquenard recognized her present, and could not at first comprehend this restitution; but the visit of Porthos soon enlightened her. The anger which fired the eyes of the musketeer, in spite of his efforts to suppress it, terrified his sensitive inamorata. In fact, Mousqueton had not concealed from his master that he had met D'Artagnan and Aramis, and that D'Artagnan in the yellow horse had recognized the Béarnese pony upon which he had come to Paris, and which he had sold for three crowns.

Porthos went away after having appointed a meeting with the procurator's wife in the cloister of St. Magloire. The procurator, seeing he was going, invited him to dinner, — an invitation which the musketeer refused with a majestic air.

Madame Coquenard repaired trembling to the cloister of St. Magloire, for she guessed the reproaches that awaited her there; but she was fascinated by the lofty airs of Porthos.

All that which a man wounded in his self-love could let fall in the shape of imprecations and reproaches upon the head of a woman Porthos let fall upon the bowed head of the procurator's wife.

"Alas," said she, "I did all for the best! One of our

clients is a horse-dealer; he owes money to the office, and is backward in his pay. I took the mule and the horse for what he owed us; he assured me that they were two noble steeds."

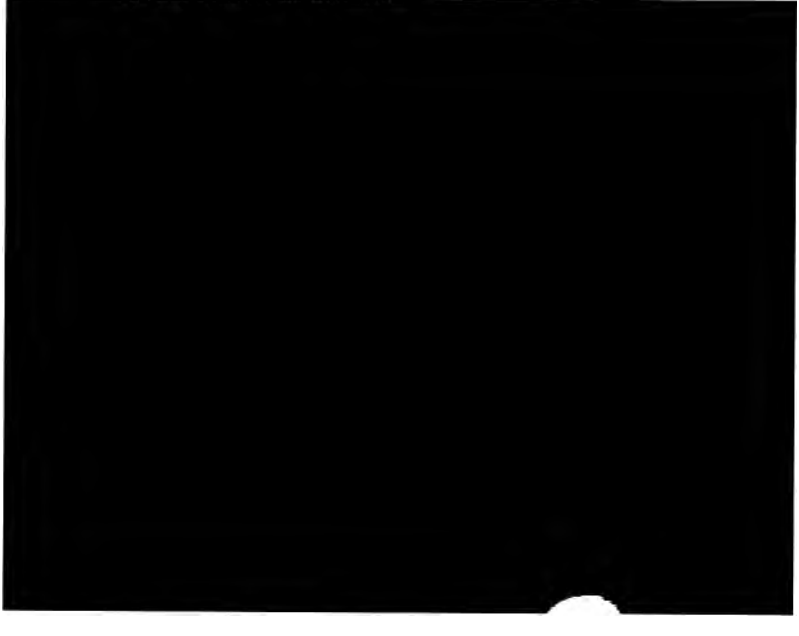
"Well, Madame," said Porthos, "if he owed you more than five crowns, your horse-dealer is a thief."

"There is no harm in trying to buy things cheap, M. Porthos," said the procurator's wife, seeking to excuse herself.

"No, Madame; but they who so assiduously try to buy things cheap ought to permit others to seek more generous friends." And Porthos, turning on his heel, made a step to retire.

"M. Porthos! M. Porthos!" cried the procurator's wife. "I have been wrong; I see it. I ought not to have driven a bargain when it was to equip a cavalier like you."

Porthos, without reply, retreated a second step. The procurator's wife fancied she saw him in a brilliant cloud, all surrounded by duchesses and marchionesses, who cast bags of money at his feet.



"It was wrong, M. Porthos; but I will repair that wrong, upon my word of honor."

"How so?" asked the musketeer.

"Listen. This evening M. Coquenard is going to the house of the Duc de Chaulnes, who has sent for him. It is for a consultation, which will last three hours at least. Come! We shall be alone, and can make up our accounts."

"In good time. Now you talk, my dear."

"You pardon me?"

"We shall see," said Porthos, majestically; and the two separated, saying, "Till this evening."

"The devil!" thought Porthos, as he walked away, "it appears I am getting nearer to M. Coquenard's strong box at last."

## CHAPTER V.

### ALL CATS ARE GRAY IN THE DARK.

THE evening so impatiently waited for by Porthos and by D'Artagnan at last arrived.

As was his custom, D'Artagnan presented himself at Milady's about nine o'clock. He found her in a charming humor. Never had he been so well received. Our Gascon knew, by the first glance of his eye, that his billet had been delivered, and that this billet had had its effect.

Kitty entered to bring some sherbet. Her mistress put on a charming face, and smiled on her graciously; but alas! the poor girl was so sad that she did not even notice Milady's condescension.

"She loves him devilishly," he murmured. Then he went out.

This time Kitty was nowhere waiting for him; neither in the antechamber, nor in the corridor, nor beneath the great door. It was necessary that D'Artagnan should find alone the staircase and the little chamber. She heard him enter, but she did not raise her head. The young man went to her and took her hands; then she sobbed aloud.

As D'Artagnan had presumed, on receiving his letter, Milady in a delirium of joy had told her servant everything; and by way of recompense for the manner in which she had this time executed the commission, she had given Kitty a purse.

Returning to her own room Kitty had thrown the purse into a corner, where it lay open, disgorging three or four gold pieces on the carpet. The poor girl, under the caresses of D'Artagnan, lifted her head. D'Artagnan himself was frightened by the change in her countenance. She joined her hands with a suppliant air, but without venturing to speak a word. As little sensitive as was the heart of D'Artagnan, he was touched by this mute sorrow; but he held too tenaciously to his projects, above all to this one, to change the programme which he had laid out in advance. He did not therefore allow her any hope that he would flinch; only he represented his action as one of simple vengeance.

For the rest this vengeance was very easy; for Milady, doubtless to conceal her blushes from her lover, had ordered Kitty to extinguish all the lights in the apartment, and even in the little chamber itself. Before daybreak M. de Wardes must take his departure, still in obscurity.

Presently they heard Milady retire to her room. D'Artagnan slipped into the wardrobe. Hardly was he concealed when the little bell sounded. Kitty went to her

mistress, and did not leave the door open; but the partition was so thin that one could hear nearly all that passed between the two women.

Milady seemed overcome with joy, and made Kitty repeat the smallest details of the pretended interview of the *soubrette* with De Wardes when he received the letter; how he had responded; what was the expression of his face; if he seemed very amorous. And to all these questions poor Kitty, forced to put on a pleasant face, responded in a stifled voice whose dolorous accent her mistress did not however remark, solely because happiness is egotistical.

Finally, as the hour for her interview with the count approached, Milady had everything about her darkened, and ordered Kitty to return to her own chamber, and introduce De Wardes whenever he presented himself.

Kitty's detention was not long. Hardly had D'Artagnan seen, through a crevice in his closet, that the whole apartment was in obscurity, than he slipped out of his concealment, at the very moment when Kitty reclosed the

foreseen. Jealousy gnawed his heart; and he suffered almost as much as poor Kitty, who at that very moment was crying in the next chamber.

"Yes, Count," said Milady, in her softest voice, and pressing his hand in her own, "I am happy in the love which your looks and your words have expressed to me every time we have met. I also, — I love you. Oh, to-morrow, to-morrow, I must have some pledge from you which will prove that you think of me; and that you may not forget me, take this!" and she slipped a ring from her finger on to D'Artagnan's. D'Artagnan remembered having seen this ring on the finger of Milady; it was a magnificent sapphire, encircled with brilliants.

The first movement of D'Artagnan was to return it, but Milady added, "No, no! Keep that ring for love of me. Besides, in accepting it," she added, in a voice full of emotion, "you render me a much greater service than you imagine."

"This woman is full of mysteries," murmured D'Artagnan to himself. At that instant he felt himself ready to reveal all. He even opened his mouth to tell Milady who he was, and with what a revengeful purpose he had come; but she added, "Poor angel, whom that monster of a Gascon barely failed to kill."

The monster was himself.

"Oh," continued Milady, "do your wounds still make you suffer?"

"Yes, much," said D'Artagnan, who did not well know how to answer.

"Be tranquil," murmured Milady; "I will avenge you, — and cruelly!"

"*Peste!*" said D'Artagnan to himself, "the moment for confidences has not yet come."

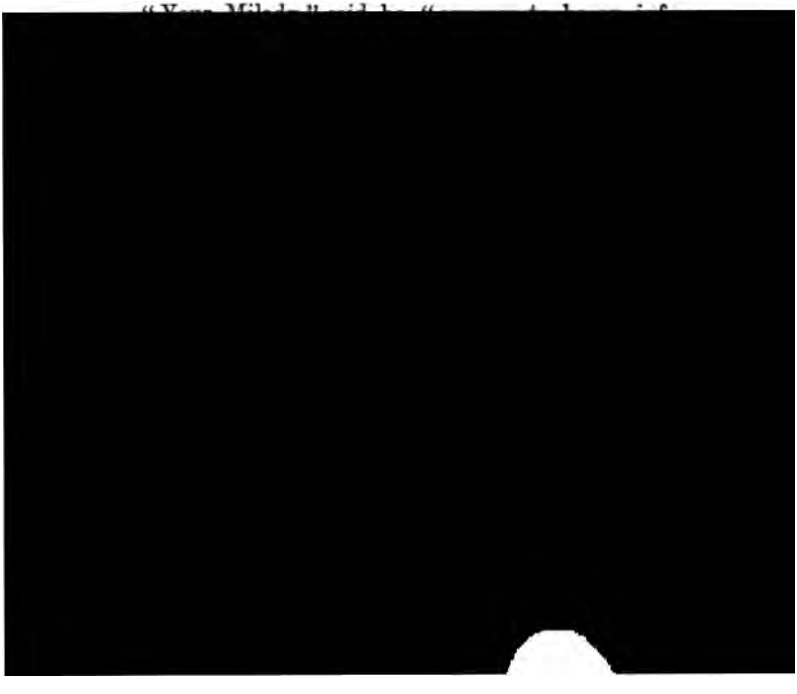
It took some time for D'Artagnan to resume this little

dialogue; but then all the ideas of vengeance which he had brought with him had completely vanished. This woman exercised over him an unaccountable power; he hated and adored her at the same time. He would not have believed that two sentiments so opposite could dwell in the same heart, and by their union constitute a passion so strange, and as it were, diabolical.

Presently it sounded one o'clock. It was necessary to separate. D'Artagnan at the moment of quitting Milady felt only the liveliest regret at the parting; and as they addressed each other in a reciprocally passionate adieu, another interview was arranged for the following week.

Poor Kitty hoped to speak a few words to D'Artagnan when he passed through her chamber; but Milady herself re-conducted him through the darkness, and only quitted him at the staircase.

The next morning D'Artagnan ran to find Athos. He was engaged in an adventure so singular that he wished for counsel. He therefore told him all.



"No. It is a gift from my beautiful Englishwoman, or rather Frenchwoman, — for I am convinced she was born in France, though I have not questioned her."

"That ring comes from Milady?" cried Athos, with a voice in which it was easy to detect strong emotion.

"Her very self; she gave it me last night. Here it is," replied D'Artagnan, taking it from his finger.

Athos examined it and became very pale. He tried it on his left hand; it fitted his finger as if made for it.

A shade of anger and vengeance passed across the usually calm brow of this gentleman.

"It is impossible it can be she," said he. "How could this ring come into the hands of Milady Clarik? And yet it is difficult to suppose such a resemblance should exist between two jewels."

"Do you know this ring?" said D'Artagnan.

"I thought I did," replied Athos; "but no doubt I was mistaken." And he returned D'Artagnan the ring without, however, ceasing to look at it.

"Pray, D'Artagnan," said Athos, after a minute, "either take off that ring or turn the mounting inside; it recalls such cruel recollections that I shall have no head to converse with you. Don't ask me for counsel; don't tell me you are perplexed what to do. But stop! let me look at that sapphire again; the one I mentioned to you had one of its faces scratched by accident."

D'Artagnan took off the ring, giving it again to Athos.

Athos started. "Look," said he, "is it not strange?" and he pointed out to D'Artagnan the scratch he had remembered.

"But from whom did this ring come to you, Athos?"

"From my mother, who inherited it from her mother. As I told you, it is an old family jewel."

"And you — sold it?" asked D'Artagnan, hesitatingly.

"No," replied Athos, with a singular smile. "I gave it away in a night of love, as it has been given to you."

D'Artagnan became pensive in his turn; it appeared as if there were abysses in Milady's soul whose depths were dark and unknown. He took back the ring, but put it in his pocket and not on his finger.

"D'Artagnan," said Athos, taking his hand, "you know I love you; if I had a son I could not love him better. Take my advice, renounce this woman. I do not know her, but a sort of intuition tells me she is a lost creature, and that there is something fatal about her."

"You are right," said D'Artagnan; "I will have done with her. I own that this woman terrifies me."

"Shall you have the courage?" said Athos.

"I shall," replied D'Artagnan, "and instantly."

"In truth, my young friend, you will act rightly," said the gentleman, pressing the Gascon's hand with an affection almost paternal; "and God grant that this woman, who has scarcely entered into your life, may not leave a

Do not depend upon me, Madame, for the next meeting. Since my convalescence I have so many affairs of this kind on my hands that I am forced to regulate them a little. When your turn comes, I shall have the honor to inform you of it. I kiss your hands.

COMTE DE WARDES.

Not a word about the sapphire. Was the Gascon determined to keep it as a weapon against Milady, or else, let us be frank, did he not reserve the sapphire as a last resource for his outfit? It would be wrong to judge the actions of one period from the point of view of another. That which would now be considered as disgraceful to a gentleman was at that time quite a simple and natural affair, and the younger sons of the best families were frequently supported by their mistresses. D'Artagnan gave the open letter to Kitty, who at first was unable to comprehend it, but who became almost wild with joy on reading it a second time. She could scarcely believe in her happiness; and D'Artagnan was forced to renew with the living voice the assurances which he had written. And whatever might be — considering the violent character of Milady — the danger which the poor girl incurred in giving this billet to her mistress, she ran back to the Place Royale as fast as her legs could carry her.

The heart of the best woman is pitiless towards the sorrows of a rival.

Milady opened the letter with eagerness equal to Kitty's in bringing it; but at the first words she read she became livid. She crushed the paper in her hand, and turning with flashing eyes upon Kitty, she cried, "What is this letter?"

"The answer to Madame's," replied Kitty, all in a tremble.

"Impossible!" cried Milady. "It is impossible a

gentleman could have written such a letter to a woman." Then all at once, starting, she cried, "My God! can he have —" and she stopped. She ground her teeth; she was of the color of ashes. She tried to go towards the window for air, but she could only stretch forth her arms; her legs failed her, and she sank into an armchair. Kitty, fearing she was ill, hastened towards her and was beginning to open her dress; but Milady started up, pushing her away. "What do you want with me?" said she, "and why do you place your hand on me?"

"I thought that Madame was ill, and I wished to bring her help," responded the maid, frightened at the terrible expression which had come over her mistress's face.

"I faint? I? I? Do you take me for half a woman? When I am insulted I do not faint; I avenge myself!"

And she made a sign for Kitty to leave the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DREAM OF VENGEANCE.

That evening Milady gave orders that when M. d'Artagnan came as usual, he should be immediately admitted; but he did not come.

The next day Kitty went to see the young man again, and related to him all that had passed on the preceding evening. D'Artagnan smiled; this jealous anger of Milady was his revenge.

That evening Milady was still more impatient than on the preceding evening. She renewed the order relative to the Gascon; but as before she expected him in vain.

The next morning, when Kitty presented herself at D'Artagnan's, she was no longer joyous and alert as on the two preceding days; but on the contrary sad as death.

D'Artagnan asked the poor girl what was the matter with her; but she, as her only reply, drew a letter from her pocket and gave it to him.

This letter was in Milady's handwriting; only this time it was addressed to M. d'Artagnan, and not to M. de Wardes.

He opened it and read as follows:—

Dear M. d'Artagnan, — It is wrong thus to neglect your friends, particularly at the moment you are about to leave them for so long a time. My brother-in-law and myself expected you yesterday and the day before, but in vain. Will it be the same this evening? Your very grateful

Milady Clarik.

"That 's all very simple," said D'Artagnan; "I expected this letter. My credit rises by the fall of that of the Comte de Wardes."

"And will you go?" asked Kitty.

"Listen to me, my dear girl," said the Gascon, who sought for an excuse in his own eyes for breaking the promise he had made Athos; "you must understand it would be impolitic not to accept such a positive invitation. Milady, not seeing me come again, would not be able to understand what could cause the interruption of my visits, and might suspect something; who could say how far the vengeance of such a woman would go?"

"Oh, my God!" said Kitty, "you know how to represent things in such a way that you are always in the right. You are going now to pay your court to her again, and if this time you succeed in pleasing her in your own name and with your own face, it will be much worse than before."

Instinct made poor Kitty guess a part of what was to

He was introduced.

"I am at home to nobody," said Milady; "observe, to *nobody*."

The servant went out.

D'Artagnan cast an inquiring glance at Milady. She was pale, and looked fatigued, either from tears or want of sleep. The number of lights had been intentionally diminished, but the young woman could not conceal the traces of the fever which had devoured her for two days.

D'Artagnan approached her with his usual gallantry. She then made an extraordinary effort to receive him, but never did a more distressed countenance give the lie to a more amiable smile.

To the questions which D'Artagnan put concerning her health, she replied, "Bad, very bad."

"Then," replied he, "my visit is ill-timed; you, no doubt, stand in need of repose, and I will withdraw."

"No, no!" said Milady. "On the contrary, stay, M. d'Artagnan; your agreeable company will divert me."

"Oh, oh!" thought D'Artagnan. "She has never been so kind before. On guard!"

Milady assumed the most agreeable air possible, and conversed with more than her usual brilliancy. At the same time the fever, which for an instant abandoned her, returned to give lustre to her eyes, color to her cheeks, and vermilion to her lips. D'Artagnan was again in the presence of the Circe who had before surrounded him with her enchantments. His love, which he believed to be extinct, but which was only asleep, awoke again in his heart. Milady smiled, and D'Artagnan felt that he could damn himself for that smile. There was a moment at which he felt something like remorse.

By degrees, Milady became more communicative. She asked D'Artagnan if he had a mistress.

"Alas!" said D'Artagnan, with the most sentimental air he could assume, "can you be cruel enough to put such a question to me, — to me, who, from the moment I saw you, have only breathed and sighed through you and for you?"

Milady smiled with a strange smile.

"Then you love me?" said she.

"Have I any need to tell you so? Have you not perceived it?"

"It may be; but you know the more hearts are worth the capture, the more difficult they are to be won."

"Oh, difficulties do not affright me," said D'Artagnan. "I shrink before nothing but impossibilities."

"Nothing is impossible," replied Milady, "to true love."

"Nothing, Madame?"

"Nothing," replied Milady.

[redacted]

in her turn drawing her armchair nearer to D'Artagnan's chair.

"I am all attention, Madame," said he.

Milady remained thoughtful and undecided for a moment; then, as if appearing to have formed a resolution, she said, "I have an enemy."

"You, Madame!" said D'Artagnan, affecting surprise; "is that possible, my God?—good and beautiful as you are!"

"A mortal enemy."

"Indeed!"

"An enemy who has insulted me so cruelly that between him and me it is war to the death. May I reckon on you as an auxiliary?"

D'Artagnan at once perceived the ground which the vindictive creature wished to reach.

"You may, Madame," said he, with emphasis. "My arm and my life belong to you, like my love."

"Then," said Milady, "since you are as generous as you are loving—"

She stopped.

"Well?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"Well," replied Milady, after a moment of silence, "from the present time, cease to talk of impossibilities."

"Do not overwhelm me with happiness," cried D'Artagnan, throwing himself on his knees, and covering with kisses the hands abandoned to him.

"Avenge me of that infamous De Wardes," said Milady, between her teeth, "and I shall soon know how to get rid of you,—you double idiot, you animated sword-blade!"

"Fall voluntarily into my arms, hypocritical and dangerous woman," said D'Artagnan, likewise to himself, "after having abused me with such effrontery, and after-

wards I will laugh at you with him whom you wish me to kill."

D'Artagnan lifted up his head.

"I am ready," said he.

"You have understood me, then, dear M. d'Artagnan," said Milady.

"I could interpret one of your looks."

"Then you would employ for me your arm which has already acquired so much renown?"

"Instantly!"

"But on my part," said Milady, "how should I repay such a service? I know these lovers. They are men who do nothing for nothing."

"You know the only reply that I desire," said D'Artagnan, — "the only one worthy of you and of me!"

And he drew nearer to her.

She scarcely resisted.

"Interested man!" cried she, smiling.

"Ah," cried D'Artagnan, really carried away by the passion this woman had the power to kindle in his heart

"Yes, you must; see what confidence I have in you!"

"You overwhelm me with joy. What is his name?"

"You know him."

"Indeed."

"Yes."

"It is surely not one of my friends?" replied D'Artagnan, affecting hesitation in order to make her believe him ignorant.

"If it were one of your friends you would hesitate, then?" cried Milady; and a threatening glance darted from her eyes.

"Not if it were my own brother!" cried D'Artagnan, as if carried away by his enthusiasm.

Our Gascon promised this without risk, for he knew all that was meant.

"I love your devotedness," said Milady.

"Alas, do you love nothing else in me?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I love you also, *you!*" said she, taking his hand.

The warm pressure made D'Artagnan tremble, as if by the touch; that fever which consumed Milady attacked himself.

"You love me, you!" cried he. "Oh, if that were so I should lose my reason!"

And he folded her in his arms. She made no effort to remove her lips from his kisses; only she did not respond to them. Her lips were cold; it appeared to D'Artagnan that he had embraced a statue.

He was not the less intoxicated with joy, electrified by love. He almost believed in the tenderness of Milady; he almost believed in the crime of De Wardes. If De Wardes had at that moment been under his hand, he would have killed him.

Milady seized the occasion.

"His name is — " said she, in her turn.

"De Wardes; I know it," cried D'Artagnan.

"And how do you know it?" asked Milady, seizing both his hands, and endeavoring to read with her eyes to the bottom of his heart.

D'Artagnan felt he had allowed himself to be carried away, and that he had committed an error.

"Tell me, tell me, tell me, I say," repeated Milady, "how do you know it?"

"How do I know it?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"I know it, because yesterday M. de Wardes, in a saloon where I was, showed a ring which he said he had received from you."

"Wretch!" cried Milady.

The epithet, as may be easily understood, resounded to the very bottom of D'Artagnan's heart.

"Well?" continued she.

"Well, I will avenge you of this wretch," replied

"No," said she, "you will avenge me; but you will not be dead. He is a coward."

"With women, perhaps; but not with men. I know something of him."

"But it seems you had not much reason to complain of your fortune in your contest with him."

"Fortune is a courtesan; favorable yesterday, she may turn her back to-morrow."

"Which means that you now hesitate?"

"No, I do not hesitate; God forbid! But would it be just to allow me to go to a possible death without having given me at least something more than hope?"

Milady answered by a glance which said, "Is that all?—speak, then." And then accompanying the glance with explanatory words, "That is but too just," said she, tenderly.

"Oh, you are an angel!" exclaimed the young man.

"Then all is agreed?" said she.

"Except that which I ask of you, dear love."

"But when I assure you that you may rely on my tenderness?"

"I cannot wait till to-morrow."

"Silence! I hear my brother. It will be useless for him to find you here."

She rang the bell, and Kitty appeared.

"Go out this way," said she, opening a small private door, "and come back at eleven o'clock; we will then terminate this conversation. Kitty will conduct you to my chamber."

The poor girl almost fainted at hearing these words.

"Well, Mademoiselle, what are you thinking about, standing there like a statue? Do as I bid you: show the chevalier out; and this evening, at eleven o'clock—you have heard what I said."

"It appears that these appointments are all made for eleven o'clock," thought D'Artagnan; "that 's a settled custom.'

Milady held out her hand to him, which he kissed tenderly.

"But," said he, as he retired as quickly as possible from the reproaches of Kitty, — "but I must not play the fool. This woman is certainly a great liar. I must take care."

## CHAPTER VII.

### MILADY'S SECRET.

D'Artagnan left the hôtel instead of going up at once to Kitty's chamber, as she endeavored to persuade him to do, — and that for two reasons: the first, because by this means he should escape reproaches, recriminations, and prayers; the second, because he was not sorry to have an opportunity of reading his own thoughts, and endeavoring, if possible, to fathom those of this woman.

What was most clear in the matter was that D'Artagnan loved Milady like a madman, and that she did not love him at all. In an instant D'Artagnan perceived that the best way in which he could act would be to go home and write Milady a long letter, in which he would confess to her that he and De Wardes were, up to the present moment, absolutely the same, and that consequently he could not undertake, without committing suicide, to kill the Comte de Wardes. But he also was spurred on by a ferocious desire of vengeance. He wished to subdue this woman in his own name; and as this vengeance appeared to him to have a certain sweetness in it, he could not make up his mind to renounce it.

He walked six or seven times round the Place Royale, turning at every ten steps to look at the light in Milady's apartment, which was to be seen through the blinds. It was evident that this time the young woman was not in such haste to retire to her apartment as she had been the first.

At length the light disappeared. With this light was

extinguished the last irresolution in the heart of D'Artagnan. He recalled to his mind the details of the first night, and with a beating heart and a brain on fire he re-entered the hôtel and flew towards Kitty's chamber.

The poor girl, pale as death, and trembling in all her limbs, wished to delay her lover; but Milady, with her ear on the watch, had heard the noise D'Artagnan had made, and opening the door, said, "Come in."

All this was of such incredible immodesty, of such monstrous effrontery, that D'Artagnan could scarcely believe what he saw or what he heard. He imagined himself to be drawn into one of those fantastic intrigues one meets in dreams. He, however, darted not the less quickly towards Milady, yielding to that magnetic attraction which the loadstone exercises over iron.

As the door closed after them Kitty rushed towards it. Jealousy, fury, offended pride, all the passions in short that dispute the heart of an outraged woman in love, urged her to make a revelation; but she reflected that

He was absorbed entirely by the sensations of the moment. Milady was no longer for him that woman of fatal intentions who had for a moment terrified him; she was an ardent, passionate mistress, abandoning herself to love which she also seemed to feel. Two hours thus glided away. When the transports of the two lovers were calmer, Milady, who had not the same motives for forgetfulness that D'Artagnan had, was the first to return to reality, and asked the young man if the means which were on the morrow to bring on the encounter between him and De Wardes were already arranged in his mind.

But D'Artagnan, whose ideas had taken quite another course, forgot himself like a fool, and answered gallantly that it was too late to think about duels and sword-thrusts.

This coldness towards the only interests that occupied her mind terrified Milady, whose questions became more pressing.

Then D'Artagnan, who had never seriously thought of this impossible duel, endeavored to turn the conversation; but he could not succeed. Milady kept him within the limits she had traced beforehand with her irresistible spirit and her iron will.

D'Artagnan fancied himself very cunning when advising Milady to renounce, by pardoning De Wardes, the furious projects she had formed.

But at the first word the young woman started, and exclaimed in a sharp, bantering tone, which sounded strangely in the darkness, "Are you afraid, dear M. d'Artagnan?"

"You cannot think so, dear love!" replied D'Artagnan; "but now, suppose this poor Comte de Wardes were less guilty than you think him?"

"At all events," said Milady, seriously, "he has de-

ceived me, and from the moment he deceived me, he merited death."

"He shall die, then, since you condemn him!" said D'Artagnan, in so firm a tone that it appeared to Milady an undoubted proof of devotion. This re-assured her.

We cannot say how long the night seemed to Milady, but D'Artagnan believed it to be hardly two hours before the daylight peeped through the window blinds, and invaded the chamber with its paleness. Seeing D'Artagnan about to leave her, Milady recalled his promise to avenge her on the Comte de Wardes.

"I am quite ready," said D'Artagnan; "but in the first place I should like to be certain of one thing."

"And what is that?" asked Milady.

"That is, whether you really love me?"

"I have given you proof of that, it seems to me."

"And I am yours, body and soul!"

"Thanks, my brave lover; but as you are satisfied of my love, you must, in your turn, satisfy me of yours. Is it not so?"

"Really," said she, "I believe you now begin to hesitate."

"No, I do not hesitate; but I really pity this poor Comte de Wardes, since you have ceased to love him. I think that a man must be so severely punished by the loss of your love that he stands in need of no other chastisement."

"Who told you that I loved him?" asked Milady, sharply.

"At least, I am now at liberty to believe, without too much fatuity, that you love another," said the young man, in a caressing tone, "and I repeat that I am really interested for the count."

"You?" asked Milady.

"Yes, I."

"And why *you?*"

"Because I alone know —"

"What?"

"That he is far from being, or rather having been, so guilty towards you as he appears."

"Indeed!" said Milady, in an anxious tone; "explain yourself, for I really cannot tell what you mean."

And she looked at D'Artagnan, who embraced her tenderly, with eyes which seemed to burn themselves away.

"Yes; I am a man of honor," said D'Artagnan, determined to come to an end, "and since your love is mine, and I am satisfied I possess it, — for I do possess it, do I not?"

"Entirely; go on."

"Well, I feel as if transformed, — a confession weighs on my mind."

"A confession!"

"If I had the least doubt of your love I would not

make it; but you love me, my beautiful mistress, do you not?"

"Without doubt."

"Then if through excess of love I have rendered myself culpable towards you, you will pardon me?"

"Perhaps."

D'Artagnan tried with his sweetest smile to touch his lips to Milady's, but she evaded him.

"This confession," said she, growing paler, "what is this confession?"

"You gave De Wardes a meeting on Thursday last in this very room, did you not?"

"No, no! It is not true," said Milady, in a tone of voice so firm, and with a countenance so unchanged, that if D'Artagnan had not been in such perfect possession of the fact, he would have doubted.

"Do not lie, my angel," said D'Artagnan, smiling; "that would be useless."

"What do you mean? Speak! you kill me."

[redacted]

D'Artagnan detained her by her nightdress of fine India linen, to implore her pardon; but she, with a strong movement, tried to escape. Then the cambric was torn from her beautiful shoulders; and on one of those lovely shoulders, round and white, D'Artagnan recognized, with inexpressible astonishment, the *fleur-de-lis*, — that indelible mark which the hand of the infamous executioner had imprinted.

"Great God!" cried D'Artagnan, loosing his hold of her dress, and remaining mute, motionless, and frozen.

But Milady felt herself denounced even by his terror. He had doubtless seen all. The young man now knew her secret, her terrible secret, — the secret she concealed even from her maid with such care, the secret of which all the world was ignorant, except himself.

She turned upon him, no longer like a furious woman, but like a wounded panther.

"Ah, wretch!" cried she, "you have basely betrayed me, and still more, you have my secret! You shall die."

And she flew to a little inlaid casket which stood upon the dressing-table, opened it with a feverish and trembling hand, drew from it a small poniard, with a golden haft and a sharp thin blade, and then threw herself with a bound upon D'Artagnan.

Although the young man was brave, as we know, he was terrified at that wild countenance, those terribly dilated pupils, those pale cheeks, and those bleeding lips. He recoiled to the other side of the room as he would have done from a serpent which was crawling towards him, and his sword coming in contact with his nervous hand, he drew it almost unconsciously from the scabbard. But without taking any heed of the sword, Milady endeavored to get near enough to him to stab him, and did not stop till she felt the sharp point at her throat.

She then tried to seize the sword with her hands; but D'Artagnan kept it free from her grasp, and presenting the point, sometimes at her eyes, sometimes at her breast, compelled her to glide behind the bedstead, while he aimed at making his retreat by the door which led to Kitty's apartment.

Milady during this time continued to strike at him with horrible fury, screaming in a formidable way.

As all this, however, bore some resemblance to a duel, D'Artagnan began to recover himself little by little.

"Well, beautiful lady, very well," said he; "but, *pardieu*, if you don't calm yourself, I will design a second *fleur-de-lis* upon one of those pretty cheeks!"

"Scoundrel, infamous scoundrel!" howled Milady.

But D'Artagnan, still keeping on the defensive, drew near to Kitty's door. At the noise they made, she in overturning the furniture in her efforts to get at him, he in screening himself behind the furniture to keep out of her reach, Kitty opened the door. D'Artagnan, who had unceasingly manœuvred to gain this point, was not at more

"But you can't go out so," said Kitty; "you are naked."

"That's true," said D'Artagnan, then first thinking of the costume he found himself in, — "that's true. But dress me as well as you are able, only make haste; think, my dear girl, it's life and death!"

Kitty was but too well aware of that. In a turn of the hand she muffled him up in a flowered robe, a large hood, and a cloak. She gave him some slippers, in which he placed his naked feet, and then conducted him down the stairs. It was time. Milady had already rung her bell, and roused the whole hôtel. The porter was drawing the cord at the moment Milady cried from her window, "Don't open!"

The young man fled while she was still threatening him with an impotent gesture. The moment she lost sight of him, Milady tumbled fainting into her chamber.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW, WITHOUT INCOMMODING HIMSELF, ATHOS FOUND HIS OUTFIT.

D'ARTAGNAN was so completely bewildered that without taking any heed of what might become of Kitty he ran at full speed across half Paris, and did not stop till he came to Athos's door. The confusion of his mind, the terror which spurred him on, the cries of some of the patrol who started in pursuit of him, and the hooting of the people, who, notwithstanding the early hour, were going to their work, only made him precipitate his course.

He crossed the court, ran up the two flights to Athos's apartments, and knocked at the door enough to break it down.

"Hold your tongue, you stupid fellow!" said the young man; "I am D'Artagnan; don't you know me? Where is your master?"

"You, M. d'Artagnan!" cried Grimaud, "impossible!"

"Grimaud," said Athos, coming out of his apartment in a dressing-gown, "Grimaud, I thought I heard you permitting yourself to speak?"

"Ah, Monsieur, it is —"

"Silence!"

Grimaud contented himself with pointing D'Artagnan out to his master with his finger.

Athos recognized his comrade, and phlegmatic as he was, he burst into a laugh which was quite excused by the strange masquerade before his eyes, — petticoats falling over his shoes, sleeves tucked up, and mustaches stiff with agitation.

"Don't laugh, my friend!" cried D'Artagnan; "for Heaven's sake, don't laugh, for upon my soul, it's no laughing matter!"

And he pronounced these words with such a solemn air and with such a real appearance of terror, that Athos eagerly seized his hand, crying, "Are you wounded, my friend? How pale you are!"

"No, but I have just met with a terrible adventure! Are you alone, Athos?"

"*Parbleu!* who do you expect to find with me at this hour?"

"Well, well!" and D'Artagnan rushed into Athos's chamber.

"Come, speak!" said the latter, closing the door and bolting it, that they might not be disturbed. "Is the king dead? Have you killed the cardinal? You are quite upset! Come, come, tell me; I am dying with curiosity and uneasiness!"

"Athos," said D'Artagnan, getting rid of his female garments, and appearing in his shirt, "prepare yourself to hear an incredible, an unheard-of history."

"Well, but put on this dressing-gown first," said the musketeer to his friend.

D'Artagnan donned the robe as quickly as he could, mistaking one sleeve for the other, so greatly was he still agitated.

"Well?" said Athos.

"Well," replied D'Artagnan, bending his mouth to Athos's ear, and lowering his voice, "Milady is marked with a *fleur-de-lis* upon her shoulder!"

"Ah!" cried the musketeer, as if he had received a ball in his heart.

"Let us see," said D'Artagnan. "Are you *sure* that the *other* is dead?"

"*The other?*" said Athos, in so stifled a voice that D'Artagnan scarcely heard him.

"Yes, she of whom you told me one day at Amiens."

"But you say she is English?"

"She is called Milady, but she may be French. Lord de Winter is only her brother-in-law."

"I will see her, D'Artagnan!"

"Beware, Athos, beware. You tried to kill her; she is a woman to return you the like, and not to fail."

"She will not dare to say anything; that would be to denounce herself."

"She is capable of anything or everything. Did you ever see her furious?"

"No," said Athos.

"A tigress, a panther! Ah, my dear Athos, I am greatly afraid I have drawn a terrible vengeance on both of us!"

D'Artagnan then related all, — the mad passion of Milady and her menaces of death.

"You are right; and upon my soul, I would give my life for a hair," said Athos. "Fortunately, the day after to-morrow we leave Paris. We are going according to all probability to Rochelle, and once gone —"

"She will follow you to the end of the world, Athos, if she recognizes you. Let her, then, exhaust her vengeance on me alone!"

"My dear friend, of what consequence is it if she kills me?" said Athos. "Do you, perchance, think I set any great store by life?"

"There is something horribly mysterious under all this, Athos; this woman is one of the cardinal's spies, I am sure of that."

"In that case, take care! If the cardinal does not hold you in high admiration for the affair of London, he entertains a great hatred for you; but as, considering everything, he cannot accuse you openly, and as hatred must be satisfied, particularly when it 's a cardinal's hatred, take care of yourself! If you go out, do not go out

alone; when you eat, use every precaution. Mistrust everything in short, even your own shadow."

"Fortunately," said D'Artagnan, "all this will be only necessary till after to-morrow evening, for when once with the army, we shall have, I hope, only men to dread."

"In the mean time," said Athos, "I renounce my plan of seclusion, and wherever you go, I will go with you. You must return to the Rue des Fossoyeurs; I will accompany you."

"But however near it may be," replied D'Artagnan, "I cannot go thither in this guise."

"That 's true," said Athos, and he rang the bell.

Grimaud entered.

Athos made him a sign to go to D'Artagnan's residence, and bring back some clothes. Grimaud replied by another sign that he understood perfectly, and set off.

"All this will not advance your outfit," said Athos; "for if I am not mistaken, you have left the best of your apparel with Milady, and she will certainly not have the politeness to return it to you. Fortunately, you have the

"Sell a jewel which came from my mother! I vow I should consider it a profanation."

"Pledge it, then; you can borrow at least a thousand crowns on it. With that sum you can extricate yourself from your present difficulties; and when you are full of money again, you can redeem it, and take it back cleansed from its ancient stains, as it will have passed through the hands of usurers."

Athos smiled.

"You are a capital companion, D'Artagnan," said he; "your never-failing cheerfulness raises poor souls in affliction. Well, let us pledge the ring, but upon one condition."

"What?"

"That there shall be five hundred crowns for you, and five hundred crowns for me."

"Don't dream it, Athos. I don't need the quarter of such a sum. I who am still only in the Guards; and by selling my saddles, I shall procure it. What do I want? A horse for Planchet, that's all. Besides, you forget that I have a ring likewise."

"To which you attach more value, it seems, than I do to mine; at least, I have thought so."

"Yes, for in any extreme circumstance it might not only extricate us from some great embarrassment, but even a great danger. It is not only a valuable diamond, but it is an enchanted talisman."

"I don't at all understand you, but I believe all you say to be true. Let us return to my ring, or rather to yours. You shall take half the sum that will be advanced upon it, or I will thrown it into the Seine; and I doubt, as was the case with Polycrates, whether any fish will be sufficiently complaisant to bring it back to us."

"Well, I will take it, then," said D'Artagnan.

At this moment Grimaud returned, accompanied by Planchet; the latter, anxious about his master, and curious to know what had happened to him, took advantage of the opportunity, and brought the garments himself.

D'Artagnan dressed himself, and Athos did the same. When the two were ready to go out, the latter made Grimaud the sign of a man taking aim, and the lackey immediately took down his musketoon, and prepared to follow his master.

They arrived without accident at the Rue des Fossoyeurs. Bonacieux was standing at the door, and looked at D'Artagnan hatefully.

"Make haste, dear lodger," said he; "there is a very pretty girl waiting for you upstairs; and you know women don't like to be kept waiting."

"That's Kitty!" said D'Artagnan to himself, and darted into the passage.

Sure enough! Upon the landing leading to the chamber, and crouching against the door, he found the poor girl all in a tremble. As soon as she perceived him she

"Poor dear girl! But what can I do with you? I am going away the day after to-morrow."

"Do what you please, Monsieur Chevalier. Help me out of Paris; help me out of France!"

"I cannot take you, however, to the siege of Rochelle," said D'Artagnan.

"No; but you can place me in one of the provinces with some lady of your acquaintance, — in your own country, for instance."

"My dear little love! In my country the ladies do without chambermaids. But stop! I can manage your business for you. Planchet, go and find Aramis. Request him to come here directly. We have something very important to say to him."

"I understand," said Athos; "but why not Porthos? I should have thought that his duchess — "

"Oh, Porthos's duchess is dressed by her husband's clerks," said D'Artagnan, laughing. "Besides, Kitty would not like to live in the Rue aux Ours. Is n't it so, Kitty?"

"I do not care where I live," said Kitty, "provided I am well concealed, and nobody knows where I am."

"Meanwhile, Kitty, when we are about to separate, and you are no longer jealous of me — "

"Monsieur Chevalier, far off or near," said Kitty, "I shall always love you."

"Where the devil will constancy niche itself next?" murmured Athos.

"And I also," said D'Artagnan, — "I also. I shall always love you; be sure of that. But now, answer me. I attach great importance to the question I am about to put to you. Did you never hear talk of a young woman who was carried off one night?"

"There now! Oh, Monsieur Chevalier, do you love that woman still?"

"No, no; it is one of my friends who loves her, — M. Athos, this gentleman here."

"I?" cried Athos, with an accent like that of a man who perceives he is about to tread upon an adder.

"You, to be sure!" said D'Artagnan, pressing Athos's hand. "You know the interest we both take in this poor little Madame Bonacieux. Besides, Kitty will tell nothing; will you, Kitty? You understand, my dear girl," continued D'Artagnan, "she is the wife of that frightful baboon you saw at the door as you came in."

"Oh, my God! You remind me of my fright! If he should have known me again!"

"How? know you again? Did you ever see that man before?"

"He came twice to Milady's."

"That 's it. About what time?"

"Why, about fifteen or eighteen days ago."

"Exactly so."

"And yesterday evening he came again."

"Yesterday evening?"

"That 's true," said Athos; "we must wait for Aramis."

At that moment Aramis entered.

The matter was all explained to him, and the friends gave him to understand that among all his high connections he must find a place for Kitty.

Aramis reflected for a minute, and then said, coloring, "Will it be really rendering you a service, D'Artagnan?"

"I shall be grateful to you all my life."

"Very well. Madame de Bois-Tracy asked me, for one of her friends who resides in the provinces, I believe, for a trustworthy maid. If you can, my dear D'Artagnan, answer for Mademoiselle — "

"Oh, Monsieur, be assured that I shall be entirely devoted to the person who will give me the means of quitting Paris."

"Then," said Aramis, "this falls out very well."

He placed himself at the table and wrote a little note which he sealed with a ring, and gave the billet to Kitty.

"And now, my dear girl," said D'Artagnan, "you know that it is not good for any of us to be here. Therefore let us separate. We shall meet again in better days."

"And whenever we find each other, in whatever place it may be," said Kitty, "you will find me loving you as I love you to-day."

"Dicers' oaths!" said Athos, while D'Artagnan went to conduct Kitty downstairs.

An instant afterwards the three young men separated, agreeing to meet again at four o'clock with Athos, and leaving Planchet to guard the house.

Aramis returned home, and Athos and D'Artagnan busied themselves about pledging the sapphire.

As the Gascon had foreseen, they easily obtained three hundred pistoles on the ring. Still further, the Jew told

them that if they would sell it to him, as it would make a magnificent pendant for ear-rings, he would give five hundred pistoles for it.

Athos and D'Artagnan, with the activity of two soldiers, and the knowledge of two connoisseurs, hardly required three hours to purchase the entire equipment of the musketeer. Besides, Athos was very easy, and a noble to his fingers' ends. When a thing suited him he paid the price demanded, without thinking to ask for any abatement. D'Artagnan would have remonstrated at this; but Athos put his hand upon his shoulder, with a smile, and D'Artagnan understood that it was all very well for such a little Gascon gentleman as himself to drive a bargain, but not for a man who had the bearing of a prince. The musketeer met with a superb Andalusian horse, black as jet, nostrils of fire, legs clean and elegant, rising six years. He examined him, and found him sound and without blemish. They asked a thousand livres for him.

He might perhaps have been bought for less; but

would be a real fortune to us, my friend; let us go back to the Jew's again."

"What! will you —"

"This ring would certainly only recall very bitter remembrances; then we shall never be masters of three hundred pistoles to redeem it, so that we really should lose two hundred pistoles by the bargain. Go and tell him the ring is his, D'Artagnan, and bring back the two hundred pistoles with you."

"Reflect, Athos!"

"Ready money is needful for the present time, and we must learn how to make sacrifices. Go, D'Artagnan, go; Grimaud will accompany you with his musquetoon."

A half-hour afterwards, D'Artagnan returned with the two thousand livres, and without having met with any accident.

It was thus Athos found at home resources which he did not expect.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A VISION.

At four o'clock the four friends were all assembled with Athos. Their anxiety about their outfit had all disappeared, and each countenance only preserved the expression of its own secret disquiet, — for behind all present happiness is concealed a fear for the future.

Suddenly Planchet entered, bringing two letters for D'Artagnan.

The one was a little billet, genteelly folded, with a pretty seal in green wax on which was impressed a dove bearing a green branch.

The other was a large square epistle, resplendent with

No signature.

"That 's a snare," said Athos; "don't go, D'Artagnan."

"And yet," replied D'Artagnan, "I think I recognize the writing."

"It may be counterfeit," said Athos. "Between six and seven o'clock the road of Chaillot is quite deserted; you might as well go and ride in the forest of Bondy."

"But suppose we all go," said D'Artagnan; "what the devil! they won't devour us all four, four lackeys, horses, arms, and all!"

"And besides, it will be a chance for displaying our new equipments," said Porthos.

"But if it is a woman who writes," said Aramis, "and that woman desires not to be seen, remember, you compromise her, D'Artagnan; which is not the part of a gentleman."

"We will remain in the background," said Porthos, "and he will advance alone."

"Yes; but a pistol shot is easily fired from a carriage which goes at a gallop."

"Bah!" said D'Artagnan, "they will miss me; if they fire we will ride after the carriage, and exterminate those who may be in it. They must be enemies."

"He is right," said Porthos; "battle. Besides, we must try our new arms."

"Bah, let us enjoy that pleasure," said Aramis, with his mild and careless manner.

"As you please," said Athos.

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "it is half-past four, and we have scarcely time to be on the road of Chaillot by six."

"Besides, if we go out too late, nobody will see us," said Porthos, "and that will be a pity. Let us get ready, gentlemen."

"But this second letter," said Athos, "you forget that; it appears to me, however, that the seal denotes that it deserves to be opened. For my part, I declare, D'Artagnan, I think it of much more consequence than the little piece of waste paper you have so cunningly slipped into your bosom."

D'Artagnan blushed.

"Well," said he, "let us see, gentlemen, what are his Eminence's commands," and D'Artagnan unsealed the letter and read, —

M. d'Artagnan, of the king's Guards, company D'Essart, is expected at the Palais-Cardinal this evening, at eight o'clock.

LA HOUDINIÈRE, *Captain of the Guards.*

"The devil!" said Athos; "here 's a rendezvous much more serious than the other."

"I will go to the second after attending the first," said D'Artagnan. "One is for seven o'clock, and the other for eight; there will be time for both."

"To be sure we will," replied Aramis and Porthos, with admirable promptness and decision, as if that were the simplest thing in the world, — "to be sure we will get you out; but meantime, as we are to set off the day after to-morrow, you would do much better not to risk this Bastille."

"Let us do better than that," said Athos; "do not let us leave him during the whole evening. Let each of us wait at a gate of the palace with three musketeers behind him; if we see a close carriage, at all suspicious in appearance, come out, let us fall upon it. It is a long time since we have had a skirmish with the Guards of Monsieur the Cardinal; M. de Tréville must think us dead."

"To a certainty, Athos," said Aramis, "you were meant to be a general of the army! What do you think of the plan, gentlemen?"

"Admirable!" replied the young men in chorus.

"Well," said Porthos, "I will run to the hôtel, and engage our comrades to hold themselves in readiness by eight o'clock; the rendezvous, the Place du Palais-Cardinal. Meantime, you see that the lackeys saddle the horses."

"I have no horse," said D'Artagnan; "but that is of no consequence, I can take one of M. de Tréville's."

"That is not worth while," said Aramis, "you can have one of mine."

"One of yours! how many have you, then?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Three," replied Aramis, smiling.

"*Certes*," cried Athos, "you are the best mounted poet of France or Navarre."

"Well, my dear Aramis, you don't want three horses? I cannot comprehend what induced you to buy three!"

"Therefore I only purchased two," said Aramis.

"The third then fell from the clouds, I suppose?"

... brought to me this very morning
... who would not tell me in whose
... he had received orders from

... interrupted D'Artagnan.
... reference," said Aramis, coloring;
... said, that he had received orders
... mistress to place the horse in my
... me whence it came."
... that such things happen," said

... we can manage famously," said
... the two horses will you ride, —
... or the one that was given to

... given to me, assuredly. You cannot
... D'Artagnan, that I would commit
... "
"The unknown giver," interrupted D'Artagnan.

D'Artagnan, taking the sum from his pocket; "I know that is the coin in which you were paid for your poems."

"You are rich, then?" said Aramis.

"Rich? Richest, my dear fellow!"

And D'Artagnan chinked the remainder of his pistoles in his pocket.

"Send your saddle, then, to the hôtel of the Musketeers, and your horse can be brought back with ours."

"Very well; but it is already five o'clock, so make haste."

A quarter of an hour afterwards Porthos appeared at the end of the Rue Férou on a very handsome *genet*. Mousqueton followed him upon an Auvergne horse, small, but very handsome. Porthos was resplendent with joy and pride.

At the same time, Aramis made his appearance at the other end of the street upon a superb English charger. Bazin followed him upon a roan, holding by the halter a vigorous Mecklenburg horse; this was D'Artagnan's mount.

The two musketeers met at the gate. Athos and D'Artagnan watched their approach from the window.

"The devil!" cried Aramis, "you have a magnificent horse there, Porthos."

"Yes," replied Porthos, "it is the one that ought to have been sent to me at first. A bad joke of the husband's substituted the other; but the husband has been punished since, and I have obtained full satisfaction."

Planchet and Grimaud appeared in their turn, leading their masters' steeds. D'Artagnan and Athos put themselves into saddle with their companions, and all four set forward; Athos upon a horse he owed to a woman, Aramis on a horse he owed to his mistress, Porthos on a horse he owed to his procurator's wife, and D'Artagnan on a

horse he owed to his good fortune, — the best mistress possible.

The lackeys followed.

As Porthos had foreseen, the cavalcade produced a good effect; and if Madame Coquenard had met Porthos, and seen what a superb appearance he made upon his handsome Spanish *genet*, she would not have regretted the bleeding she had inflicted upon the strong box of her husband.

Near the Louvre the four friends met with M. de Tréville, who was returning from St. Germain; he stopped them to offer his compliments upon their appointments, which in an instant drew round them a hundred gapers.

D'Artagnan profited by the circumstance to speak to M. de Tréville of the letter with the great red seal and the cardinal's arms. It is well understood that he did not breathe a word about the other.

M. de Tréville approved of the resolution he had adopted, and assured him that if on the morrow he did not appear, he himself would undertake to find him, let him be where

man was himself astonished to find his heart beat so violently. Almost instantly a female head was put out at the window, with two fingers placed upon her mouth, either to enjoin silence, or to send him a kiss. D'Artagnan uttered a slight cry of joy; this woman, or rather this apparition, — for the carriage passed with the rapidity of a vision, — was Madame Bonacieux.

By an involuntary movement, and in spite of the injunction given, D'Artagnan put his horse into a gallop, and in a few strides overtook the carriage; but the window was hermetically closed, the vision had disappeared.

D'Artagnan then remembered the injunction: "If you value your own life, or that of those who love you, remain motionless, and as if you had seen nothing."

He stopped, therefore, trembling not for himself, but for the poor woman who had evidently exposed herself to great danger by appointing this rendezvous.

The carriage pursued its way, still going at a great pace, till it dashed into Paris, and disappeared.

D'Artagnan remained fixed to the spot, astounded, and not knowing what to think. If it was Madame Bonacieux, and if she was returning to Paris, why this fugitive rendezvous, why this simple exchange of a glance, why this lost kiss? If, on the other side, it was not she, which was still quite possible, — for the little light that remained rendered a mistake easy, — if it was not she, might it not be the commencement of some plot against him through the allurement of this woman, for whom his love was known?

His three companions joined him. All had plainly seen a woman's head appear at the window, but none of them, except Athos, knew Madame Bonacieux. The opinion of Athos was that it was indeed she; but less preoccupied by that pretty face than D'Artagnan, he had fancied he saw a second head, a man's head, inside the carriage.

"If that be the case," said D'Artagnan, "they are doubtless transporting her from one prison to another. But what can they intend to do with the poor creature, and how shall I ever meet her again?"

"Friend," said Athos, gravely, "remember that it is the dead alone with whom we are not likely to meet again on this earth. You know something of that, as well as I do, I think. Now, if your mistress is not dead, if it is she we have just seen, you will meet with her again some day or other. And perhaps, my God!" added he, with that misanthropic tone which was peculiar to him, "perhaps sooner than you wish."

Half-past seven had sounded. The carriage was twenty minutes behind the time appointed. D'Artagnan's friends reminded him that he had a visit to pay, but at the same time bidding him observe that there was yet time to retract.

But D'Artagnan was at the same time impetuous and curious. He had made up his mind that he would go to the Palais-Cardinal, and that he would learn what his Eminence had to say to him. Nothing could turn him

Athos divided them into three groups, assumed the command of one, gave the second to Aramis, and the third to Porthos; and then each group went and took their watch near an entrance.

D'Artagnan, on his part, entered boldly at the principal gate.

Although he felt himself ably supported, the young man was not without a little uneasiness as he ascended the great staircase, step by step. His conduct towards Milady bore a strong resemblance to treachery, and he was very suspicious of the political relations which existed between that woman and the cardinal. Still further, De Wardes, whom he had treated so ill, was one of the tools of his Eminence; and D'Artagnan knew that while his Eminence was terrible to his enemies, he was strongly attached to his friends.

"If De Wardes has related all our affair to the cardinal, which is not to be doubted, and if he has recognized me, as is probable, I may consider myself almost as a condemned man," said D'Artagnan, shaking his head. "But why has he waited till now? That 's all plain enough. Milady has laid her complaint against me with that hypocritical grief which renders her so interesting, and this last offence has made the cup overflow.

"Fortunately," added he, "my good friends are down yonder, and they will not allow me to be carried away without a struggle. Nevertheless, M. de Tréville's company of Musketeers alone cannot maintain a war against the cardinal, who disposes of the forces of all France, and before whom the queen is without power and the king without will. D'Artagnan, my friend, you are brave, you are prudent, you have excellent qualities; but the women will ruin you!"

He came to this melancholy conclusion as he entered

the antechamber. He placed his letter in the hands of the usher on duty, who led him into the waiting-room and passed on into the interior of the palace.

In this waiting-room were five or six of the cardinal's Guards, who recognized D'Artagnan, and knowing that it was he who had wounded Jussac, they looked upon him with a smile of singular meaning.

This smile appeared to D'Artagnan to be of bad augury. Only, as our Gascon was not easily intimidated, or rather, thanks to a great pride natural to the men of his country, he did not allow one easily to see what was passing in his mind when that which was passing at all resembled fear, he placed himself haughtily in front of Messieurs the Guards, and waited with his hand on his hip, in an attitude by no means deficient in majesty.

The usher returned and made a sign to D'Artagnan to follow him. It appeared to the young man that the guards, on seeing him depart, chuckled among themselves.

He traversed a corridor, crossed a grand saloon, entered

## CHAPTER X.

### A TERRIBLE VISION.

The cardinal leaned his elbow on his manuscript, his cheek upon his hand, and looked intently at the young man for a moment. No one had a more searching eye than the Cardinal de Richelieu, and D'Artagnan felt this glance run through his veins like a fever.

He however kept a good countenance, holding his hat in his hand and awaiting the good pleasure of his Eminence, without too much assurance, but also without too much humility.

"Monsieur," said the cardinal, "are you a D'Artagnan from Béarn?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the young man.

"There are several branches of the D'Artagnans at Tarbes and in its environs," said the cardinal; "to which do you belong?"

"I am the son of him who served in the Religious Wars under the great King Henry, the father of his gracious Majesty."

"That is well. It is you who set out, seven or eight months ago, from your country to seek your fortune in the capital?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"You came through Meung, where something befell you. I don't very well know what, but still something."

"Monseigneur," said D'Artagnan, "this was what happened to me —"

"Never mind, never mind!" resumed the cardinal, with a smile which indicated that he knew the story as well as he who wished to relate it. "You were recommended to M. de Tréville, were you not?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; but in that unfortunate affair at Meung —"

"The letter was lost," replied his Eminence; "yes, I know that. But M. de Tréville is a skilful physiognomist, who knows men at first sight; and he placed you in the company of his brother-in-law, M. d'Essart, leaving you to hope that, one day or other, you should enter the Musketeers."

"Monseigneur is correctly informed," said D'Artagnan.

"Since that time many things have happened to you. You were walking one day behind the Chartreux, when it would have been better if you had been elsewhere. Then you took with your friends a journey to the waters of Forges; they stopped on the road, but you continued yours. That is all very simple: you had business in

"Monseigneur, I feared I had incurred disgrace with your Eminence."

"How could that be, Monsieur? Could you incur my displeasure by having followed the orders of your superiors with more intelligence and courage than another would have done? It is the people who do not obey that I punish, and not those who, like you, obey — but too well. As a proof, remember the date of the day on which I had you bidden to come to me, and seek in your memory for what happened to you that very night."

That was the very evening when the abduction of Madame Bonacieux took place. D'Artagnan trembled; and he likewise recollected that during the past half-hour the poor woman had passed close to him, without doubt carried away by the same power that had caused her disappearance.

"In short," continued the cardinal, "as I have heard nothing of you for some time past, I wished to know what you were doing. Besides, you owe me some thanks. You must yourself have remarked how much you have been considered in all the circumstances."

D'Artagnan bowed with respect.

"That," continued the cardinal, "arose not only from a feeling of natural equity, but likewise from a plan I have marked out with respect to you."

D'Artagnan became more and more astonished.

"I wished to explain this plan to you on the day you received my first invitation; but you did not come. Fortunately, nothing is lost by this delay, and you are now about to hear it. Sit down there, before me, M. d'Artagnan; you are gentleman enough not to listen standing." And the cardinal pointed with his finger to a chair for the young man, who was so astonished at what was

passing that he awaited a second sign from his interlocutor before he obeyed.

"You are brave, M. d'Artagnan," continued his Eminence; "you are prudent, which is still better. I like men of head and heart. Don't be afraid," said he, smiling. "By men of heart I mean men of courage. But young as you are, and scarcely entering into the world, you have powerful enemies; if you do not take great heed, they will destroy you."

"Alas, Monseigneur!" replied the young man, "very easily, no doubt, for they are strong and well supported, while I am alone."

"Yes, that's true; but alone as you are, you have done much already, and will do still more, I don't doubt. Yet you have need, I believe, to be guided in the adventurous career you have undertaken; for, if I mistake not, you came to Paris with the ambitious idea of making your fortune."

"I am at the age of extravagant hopes, Monseigneur," said D'Artagnan.

"Monseigneur, your Eminence has ill understood my words."

"You want a pretext, do you not? I comprehend. Well, you have this excuse: advancement, the opening campaign, the opportunity which I offer you, — so much for the world. As regards yourself, the need of protection; for it is fit you should know, M. d'Artagnan, that I have received heavy and serious complaints against you. You do not consecrate your days and nights wholly to the king's service."

D'Artagnan colored.

"In fact," said the cardinal, placing his hand upon a bundle of papers, "I have here a whole pile which concerns you. I know you to be a man of resolution; and your services, well directed, instead of leading you to ill, might be very advantageous to you. Come; reflect, and decide."

"Your goodness confounds me, Monseigneur," replied D'Artagnan, "and I am conscious of a greatness of soul in your Eminence that makes me mean as an earth-worm; but since Monseigneur permits me to speak freely —"

D'Artagnan paused.

"Yes; speak."

"Then, I will presume to say, that all my friends are in the king's Musketeers and Guards, and that by an inconceivable fatality my enemies are in the service of your Eminence; I should, therefore, be ill received here and ill regarded there if I accepted what Monseigneur offers me."

"Do you happen to entertain the haughty idea that I have not yet made you an offer equal to your value?" asked the cardinal, with a smile of disdain.

"Monseigneur, your Eminence is a hundred times too kind to me; and on the contrary, I think I have not

proved myself worthy of your goodness. The siege of Rochelle is about to be resumed, Monseigneur. I shall serve under the eye of your Eminence, and if I have the good fortune to conduct myself at that siege in such a manner as merits your attention, then I shall at least leave behind me some brilliant action to justify the protection with which you honor me. Everything is best in its time, Monseigneur. Hereafter, perhaps, I shall have the right of *giving* myself; at present, I shall appear to sell myself."

"That is to say, you refuse to serve me, Monsieur," said the cardinal, with a tone of vexation, through which, however, might be seen a sort of esteem; "remain free, then, and guard your hatreds and your sympathies."

"Monseigneur —"

"Well, well," said the cardinal, "I don't wish you any ill; but you must be aware that it is quite trouble enough to defend and recompense our friends. We owe nothing to our enemies; and let me give you a piece of advice: take care of yourself, M. d'Artagnan, for from the mo-

we shall see each other again after the campaign. I will have my eye upon you, for I shall be there," replied the cardinal, pointing with his finger to a magnificent suit of armor he was to wear, "and on our return, well — we will settle our account!"

"Ah, Monseigneur!" cried D'Artagnan, "spare me the weight of your displeasure. Remain neutral, Monseigneur, if you find that I act as becomes a gallant man."

"Young man," said Richelieu, "if I shall be able to say to you at another time what I have said to you to-day, I promise you to do so."

This last expression of Richelieu's conveyed a terrible doubt; it alarmed D'Artagnan more than a menace would have done, for it was a warning. The cardinal, then, was seeking to preserve him from some misfortune which threatened him. He opened his mouth to reply, but with a haughty gesture the cardinal dismissed him.

D'Artagnan went out, but at the door his heart almost failed him, and he felt inclined to return. Then the noble and severe countenance of Athos crossed his mind; if he made the compact with the cardinal which he required, Athos would no more give him his hand, — Athos would renounce him.

It was this fear that restrained him, so powerful is the influence of a truly great character on all that surrounds it.

D'Artagnan descended by the staircase at which he had entered, and found Athos and the four musketeers waiting his appearance, and beginning to grow uneasy. With a word D'Artagnan re-assured them; and Planchet ran to inform the other sentinels that it was useless to keep guard longer, as his master had come out safe from the Palais-Cardinal.

Returned home with Athos, Aramis and Porthos inquired eagerly the cause of this strange interview; but

D'Artagnan confined himself to telling them that M. de Richelieu had sent for him to propose to him to enter into his Guards with the rank of ensign, and that he had refused.

"And you were right," cried Aramis and Porthos, with one voice.

Athos fell into a profound reverie and answered nothing. But when they were alone he said, "You have done that which you ought to have done, D'Artagnan; but perhaps you have been wrong."

D'Artagnan sighed deeply, for this voice responded to a secret voice of his soul, which told him that great misfortunes awaited him.

The whole of the next day was spent in preparations for departure. D'Artagnan went to take leave of M. de Tréville. At that time it was believed that the separation of the Musketeers and the Guards would be but momentary, the king holding his Parliament that very day, and proposing to set out the day after. M. de Tréville contented himself with asking D'Artagnan if he could do anything for him, but D'Artagnan answered that he was

The king was dull and appeared ill, which detracted a little from his usual lofty bearing. In fact, the evening before, a fever had seized him in the midst of the Parliament, while he was holding his Bed of Justice. He had, not the less, decided upon setting out that same evening; and in spite of the remonstrances that had been offered to him, he persisted in having the review, hoping by setting it at defiance to conquer the disease which began to lay hold upon him.

The review over, the Guards set forward alone on their march, the Musketeers waiting for the king, which allowed Porthos time to go and take a turn in his superb equipment in the Rue aux Ours.

The procurator's wife saw him pass in his new uniform and on his fine horse. She loved Porthos too dearly to allow him to part thus; she made him a sign to dismount and come to her. Porthos was magnificent; his spurs jingled, his cuirass glittered, his sword knocked proudly against his ample limbs. This time the clerks evinced no inclination to laugh, such a real ear-clipper did Porthos appear.

The musketeer was introduced to M. Coquenard, whose little gray eye sparkled with anger at seeing his cousin all blazing new. Nevertheless, one thing afforded him inward consolation; it was expected by everybody that the campaign would be a severe one. He whispered a hope to himself that this beloved relative might be killed in the field.

Porthos paid his compliments to M. Coquenard and bade him farewell. M. Coquenard wished him all sorts of prosperities. As to Madame Coquenard, she could not restrain her tears; but no evil impressions were taken from her grief, as she was known to be very much attached to her relatives, about whom she was constantly having serious disputes with her husband.

But the real adieux were made in Madame Coquenard's chamber; they were heart-rending.

As long as the procurator's wife could follow him with her eyes, she waved her handkerchief to him, leaning so far out of the window as to lead people to believe she wished to precipitate herself. Porthos received all these attentions like a man accustomed to such demonstrations, only on turning the corner of the street he lifted his hat gracefully, and waved it to her as a sign of adieu.

On his part Aramis wrote a long letter. To whom? Nobody knew. Kitty, who was to set out that evening for Tours, was waiting in the next chamber.

Athos sipped the last bottle of his Spanish wine.

In the mean time D'Artagnan was defiling with his company. Arriving at the Faubourg St. Antoine, he turned round to look gayly at the Bastille; but as it was the Bastille alone he looked at, he did not observe Milady, who, mounted upon a light chestnut horse, designated him with her finger to two ill-looking men who came close up to the ranks to take notice of him. To a look of

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SIEGE OF ROCHELLE.

The siege of Rochelle was one of the great political events of the reign of Louis XIII., and one of the great military enterprises of the cardinal. It is then interesting and even necessary that we should say a few words about it, particularly as many details of this siege are connected in too important a manner with the history we have undertaken to relate to allow us to pass it over in silence.

The political plans of the cardinal when he undertook this siege were extensive. Let us unfold them first, and then pass on to the private plans which perhaps had not less influence upon his Eminence than the others.

Of the important cities given up by Henry IV. to the Huguenots as places of safety, there only remained Rochelle. It became necessary, therefore, to destroy this last bulwark of Calvinism, — a dangerous leaven with which the ferments of civil revolt and foreign war were constantly mingling.

Spaniards, Englishmen, and Italian malecontents, adventurers of all nations, and soldiers of fortune of every sect, flocked at the first summons under the standard of the Protestants, and organized themselves like a vast association, whose branches diverged freely over all parts of Europe.

Rochelle, which had derived a new importance from the ruin of the other Calvinist cities, was then the focus of dissensions and ambition. Moreover, its port was the last

in the kingdom of France open to the English, and by closing it against England, our eternal enemy, the cardinal, completed the work of Joan of Arc and the Duc de Guise.

Thus Bassompierre, who was at once Protestant and Catholic, — Protestant by conviction and Catholic as commander of the order of the Holy Ghost; Bassompierre, who was a German by birth and a Frenchman at heart, — in short, Bassompierre, who had a distinguished command at the siege of Rochelle, said, in charging at the head of several other Protestant nobles like himself, "You will see, gentlemen, that we shall be fools enough to take Rochelle."

And Bassompierre was right. The cannonade of the Isle of Ré presaged to him the dragonnades of the Cévennes; the taking of Rochelle was the preface to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

We have hinted that by the side of these views of the levelling and simplifying minister, and which belong to

but this vengeance must be grand and striking and worthy in every way of a man who held in his hand, as his weapon for combat, the forces of a kingdom.

Richelieu knew that in combating England he combated Buckingham; that in triumphing over England, he triumphed over Buckingham, — in short, that in humiliating England in the eyes of Europe, he humiliated Buckingham in the eyes of the queen.

On his side Buckingham, in pretending to maintain the honor of England, was moved by interests exactly like those of the cardinal. Buckingham also was pursuing a private vengeance. Buckingham could not under any pretence be admitted into France as an ambassador; he wished to enter it as a conqueror.

It resulted from this that the real stake in this game, which two most powerful kingdoms played for the good pleasure of two amorous men, was simply a kind look from Anne of Austria.

The first advantage had been gained by Buckingham. Arriving unexpectedly in sight of the Isle of Ré, with ninety vessels and nearly twenty thousand men, he had surprised the Comte de Toiras, who commanded for the king in the Isle, and he had, after a bloody conflict, effected his landing.

Allow us to observe, in passing, that in this fight perished the Baron de Chantal; that the Baron de Chantal left a little orphan girl eighteen months old, and that this little girl was afterwards Madame de Sévigné.

The Comte de Toiras retired into the citadel St. Martin with his garrison, and threw a hundred men into a little fort called the fort of La Prée.

This event had hastened the resolutions of the cardinal; and till the king and he could take the command of the siege of Rochelle, which was determined, he had sent

Monsieur to direct the first operations, and had ordered all the troops he could dispose of to march towards the theatre of war. It was of this detachment, sent as a vanguard, that our friend D'Artagnan formed a part.

The king, as we have said, was to follow as soon as his Bed of Justice had been held; but on rising from his Bed of Justice on the 28th of June, he felt himself attacked by fever. He was, notwithstanding, anxious to set out; but his illness becoming more serious, he was forced to stop at Villeroy.

Now, whenever the king halted, the Musketeers halted. It followed that D'Artagnan, who was as yet purely and simply in the Guards, found himself, for the time at least, separated from his good friends, — Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. This separation, which was no more than an unpleasant circumstance, would have certainly become a cause of serious uneasiness if he had been able to guess by what unknown dangers he was surrounded.

He, however, arrived without accident in the camp established before Rochelle, on the 10th of the month of

His reflections were not very cheerful. From the time of his arrival in Paris, he had been mixed up with public affairs; but his own private affairs had made no great progress, either in love or fortune. As to love, the only woman he could have loved was Madame Bonacieux; and Madame Bonacieux had disappeared, without his being able to discover what had become of her. As to fortune, he had made — he, humble as he was — an enemy of the cardinal; that is to say, of a man before whom trembled the greatest men of the kingdom, beginning with the king.

That man had the power to crush him, and yet he had not done so. For a mind so perspicuous as that of D'Artagnan, this indulgence was a light by which he caught a glimpse of a better future.

Then he had made himself another enemy, less to be feared, he thought; but nevertheless, he instinctively felt, not to be despised. This enemy was Milady.

In exchange for all this, he had acquired the protection and good-will of the queen; but the favor of the queen was at the present time an additional cause of persecution, and her protection, it was known, protected badly, — as witness Chalais and Madame Bonacieux.

What he had clearly gained in all this was the diamond, worth five or six thousand livres, which he wore on his finger; and even this diamond — supposing that D'Artagnan, in his projects of ambition, wished to keep it, to make it some day a pledge for the gratitude of the queen, — had not, in the mean while, since he could not part with it, more value than the gravel he trod under his feet.

We say than the gravel he trod under his feet, for D'Artagnan made these reflections while walking solitarily along a pretty little road which led from the camp to the village

of Angoutin. Now, these reflections had led him farther than he intended, and the day was beginning to decline, when, by the last ray of the setting sun, he thought he saw the barrel of a musket glitter from behind a hedge.

D'Artagnan had a quick eye and a prompt understanding. He comprehended that the musket had not come there of itself, and that he who bore it had not concealed himself behind a hedge with any friendly intentions. He determined, therefore, to direct his course as clear from it as he could, when, on the opposite side of the road, from behind a rock, he perceived the extremity of another musket.

This was evidently an ambuscade.

The young man cast a glance at the first musket, and saw, with a certain degree of inquietude, that it was levelled in his direction; but as soon as he perceived that the orifice of the barrel was motionless, he threw himself upon the ground. At the same instant the gun was fired, and he heard the whistling of a ball pass over his head.

to re-load, fired a second shot, and this time so well aimed that it struck his hat, and carried it ten paces from him.

As he, however, had no other hat, he picked up this as he ran, and arrived at his quarters, very pale and quite out of breath. He sat down without saying a word to anybody, and began to reflect.

This event might have three causes:

The first and the most natural was that it might be an ambuscade of the Rochellais, who might not be sorry to kill one of his Majesty's Guards, because it would be an enemy the less, and this enemy might have a well-furnished purse in his pocket.

D'Artagnan took his hat, examined the hole made by the ball, and shook his head. The ball was not a musket-ball, — it was an arquebuse-ball. The accuracy of the aim had first given him the idea that a special weapon had been employed. This could not, then, be a military ambuscade, as the ball was not of the regular calibre.

This might be a kind remembrance of Monsieur the Cardinal. It may be observed that at the very moment when, thanks to the ray of the sun, he perceived the gun-barrel, he was thinking with astonishment on the forbearance of his Eminence with respect to him.

But D'Artagnan again shook his head. For people towards whom he had but to put forth his hand, his Eminence had rarely recourse to such means.

It might be a vengeance of Milady; that was most probable.

He tried in vain to remember the faces or dress of the assassins; he had escaped so rapidly that he had not had leisure to notice anything.

"Ah, my poor friends!" murmured D'Artagnan; "where are you? And that you should fail me!"

D'Artagnan passed a very bad night. Three or four times he started up, imagining that a man was approaching his bed for the purpose of stabbing him. Nevertheless, day dawned without darkness having brought any accident.

But D'Artagnan well suspected that that which was deferred was not relinquished.

D'Artagnan remained all day in his quarters, assigning as a reason to himself that the weather was bad.

At nine o'clock next morning, the drums beat to arms. The Duc d'Orléans visited the posts. The Guards were under arms, and D'Artagnan took his place in the midst of his comrades.

Monsieur passed along the front of the line; then all the superior officers approached him to pay their compliments, M. d'Essart, captain of the Guards, as well as the others.

At the expiration of a minute or two, it appeared to D'Artagnan that M. d'Essart made him a sign to approach. He waited for a fresh gesture on the part of his superior, for fear he might be mistaken; but this ges-

At the end of a few minutes Monsieur raised his voice, and said, "I want for this mission three or four volunteers, led by a man who can be depended upon."

"As to the man to be depended upon, I have him under my hand, Monsieur," said M. d'Essart, pointing to D'Artagnan; "and as to the four or five volunteers, Monsieur has but to make his intentions known, and the men will not be wanting."

"Four men of good-will who will risk being killed with me!" said D'Artagnan, raising his sword.

Two of his comrades of the Guards immediately sprang forward, and two other soldiers having joined them, the number was deemed sufficient. D'Artagnan declined all others, being unwilling to take the first chance from those who had the priority.

It was not known whether, after the taking of the bastion, the Rochellais had evacuated it or left a garrison in it; the object then was to examine the place near enough to verify the reports.

D'Artagnan set out with his four companions, and followed the trench; the two guards marched abreast with him, and the two soldiers followed behind.

They arrived thus, screened by the lining of the trench, till they came within a hundred paces of the bastion. There, on turning round, D'Artagnan perceived that the two soldiers had disappeared.

He thought that, beginning to be afraid, they had stayed behind, and he continued to advance.

At the turning of the counterscarp they found themselves within about sixty paces of the bastion. They saw no one, and the bastion seemed abandoned.

The three composing our forlorn hope were deliberating whether they should proceed any farther, when all at once a circle of smoke enveloped the giant of stone, and a

dozen balls came whistling round D'Artagnan and his companions.

They knew all they wished to know; the bastion was guarded. A longer stay in this dangerous spot would have been useless imprudence. D'Artagnan and his two companions turned their backs, and commenced a retreat which resembled a flight.

On arriving at the angle of the trench which was to serve them as a rampart, one of the guardsmen fell. A ball had passed through his breast. The other, who was safe and sound, continued his way towards the camp.

D'Artagnan was not willing to abandon his companion thus, and stooped to raise him and assist him in regaining the lines; but at this moment two shots were fired. One ball struck the head of the already wounded guard, and the other flattened itself against a rock, after having passed within two inches of D'Artagnan.

The young man turned quickly round, for this attack

making sure. Fortunately, deceived by D'Artagnan's trick, they neglected to re-load their guns.

When they were within ten paces of him, D'Artagnan, who in falling had taken care not to let go his sword, sprang up close to them.

The assassins comprehended that if they fled towards the camp without having killed their man, they should be accused by him; therefore their first idea was to join the enemy. One of them took his gun by the barrel, and used it as he would a club. He aimed a terrible blow at D'Artagnan, who avoided it by springing to one side; but by this movement he left a passage free to the bandit, who darted off towards the bastion. As the Rochellais who guarded the bastion were ignorant of the intentions of the man they saw coming towards them, they fired upon him, and he fell, struck by a ball which broke his shoulder.

Meantime D'Artagnan had thrown himself upon the other soldier, attacking him with his sword. The conflict was not long; the wretch had nothing to defend himself with but his discharged arquebuse. The sword of the guardsman slipped along the barrel of the now useless weapon, and passed through the thigh of the assassin, who fell.

D'Artagnan immediately placed the point of his sword at his throat.

"Oh, do not kill me!" cried the bandit. "Pardon, pardon, my officer, and I will tell you all."

"Is your secret of enough importance for me to spare your life for it?" asked the young man, withholding his arm.

"Yes; if you think existence worth anything to a man of twenty, as you are, and who may hope for everything, being handsome and brave, as you are."

"Wretch," cried D'Artagnan, "speak quickly! Who employed you to assassinate me?"

"A woman whom I don't know, but who is called Milady."

"But if you don't know this woman, how do you know her name?"

"My comrade knows her, and called her so. It was with him she agreed, and not with me; he even has in his pocket a letter from that person, who attaches great importance to you, as I have heard him say."

"But how did you become concerned in this villanous affair?"

"He proposed to me to undertake it with him, and I agreed."

"And how much did she give you for this fine enterprise?"

"A hundred louis."

"Well, come!" said the young man, laughing, "she thinks I am worth something. A hundred louis? Well, that was a temptation for two wretches like you. I un-

knees and leaning upon his hand, — for he began to lose his strength with his blood.

"And how do you know there is a young woman whom I love, and that I believed that woman dead?" asked D'Artagnan.

"By that letter which my comrade has in his pocket."

"You see, then," said D'Artagnan, "that I must have that letter. So no more delay, no more hesitation; or else whatever may be my repugnance to soiling my sword a second time with the blood of a wretch like you, I swear by my faith as an honest man —" and at these words D'Artagnan made so fierce a gesture that the wounded man sprang up.

"Stop, stop!" cried he, regaining strength by force of terror. "I will go, — I will go!"

D'Artagnan took the soldier's arquebuse, made him go on before him, and urged him towards his companion by pricking him behind with his sword.

It was a frightful thing to see this wretch, leaving a long track of blood on the ground he passed over, pale with approaching death, try to drag himself along without being seen to the body of his accomplice, which lay twenty paces from him.

Terror was so strongly painted on his face, covered with a cold sweat, that D'Artagnan took pity on him, and casting upon him a look of contempt, "Stop," said he, "I will show you the difference between a man of courage and such a coward as you. Stay where you are; I will go myself."

And with a light step, an eye on the watch, observing the movements of the enemy, and taking advantage of the accidents of the ground, D'Artagnan succeeded in reaching the second soldier.

There were two means of gaining his object, — to search

him on the spot, or to carry him away, making a buckler of his body, and search him in the trench.

D'Artagnan preferred the second means, and lifted the assassin on to his shoulders at the moment the enemy fired.

A slight shock, the dull noise of three balls which penetrated the flesh, a last cry, a convulsion of agony, proved to D'Artagnan that the would-be assassin had saved his life.

D'Artagnan regained the trench, and threw the corpse beside the wounded man, who was as pale as death.

Then he began search. A leather pocket-book, a purse, in which was evidently a part of the sum which the bandit had received, with a dice-box and dice, completed the possessions of the dead man.

He left the box and dice where they fell, threw the purse to the wounded man, and eagerly opened the pocket-book.

Among some unimportant papers he found the following letter, — that which he had sought at the risk of his life : —

"But what were you to do with that woman?" asked D'Artagnan, with anguish.

"We were to have conveyed her to a hôtel in the Place Royale," said the wounded man.

"Yes, yes!" murmured D'Artagnan; "that's the place, — Milady's own residence!"

Then the young man tremblingly comprehended what a terrible thirst for vengeance urged this woman on to destroy him, as well as all who loved him, and how well she must be acquainted with the affairs of the court, since she had discovered all. There could be no doubt she owed this information to the cardinal.

But amid all this he perceived, with a feeling of real joy, that the queen must have discovered the prison in which poor Madame Bonacieux was expiating her devotion, and that she had freed her from that prison; and the letter he had received from the young woman, and her passage along the road of Chaillot like an apparition, were now explained.

Then also, as Athos had predicted, it became possible to find Madame Bonacieux, and a convent was not impregnable.

This idea completely restored clemency to his heart. He turned towards the wounded man, who had watched with intense anxiety all the various expressions of his countenance, and holding out his arm to him, said, "Come, I will not abandon you thus. Lean upon me, and let us return to the camp."

"Yes," said the man, who could scarcely believe in such magnanimity, "but is it not to have me hanged?"

"You have my word," said he; "for the second time I give you your life."

The wounded man sank upon his knees, to again kiss the feet of his preserver; but D'Artagnan, who had no

longer a motive for staying so near the enemy, abridged the testimonials of his gratitude.

The guardsman who had returned at the first discharge announced the death of his four companions. They were therefore much astonished and delighted in the regiment when they saw the young man come back safe and sound.

D'Artagnan explained the sword-wound of his companion by a *sortie* which he improvised. He described the death of the other soldier, and the perils they had encountered. This recital was for him the occasion of veritable triumph. The whole army talked of this expedition for a day, and Monsieur paid him his compliments upon it. Besides this, as every great action bears its recompense with it, the brave exploit of D'Artagnan resulted in the restoration of the tranquillity he had lost. In fact, D'Artagnan believed that he might be tranquil, as one of his two enemies was killed and the other devoted to his interests.

This tranquillity proved one thing — that D'Artagnan

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ANJOU WINE.

After the most disheartening news of the king's health, a report of his convalescence began to prevail in the camp; and as he was very anxious to be in person at the siege, it was said that as soon as he could mount a horse he would set forward.

Meantime, Monsieur, who knew that from one day to the other he might expect to be removed from his command by the Duc d'Angoulême, by Bassompierre, or by Schomberg, who were all eager for his post, did but little, lost his days in wavering, and did not dare to attempt any great enterprise to drive the English from the Isle of Ré, where they still besieged the citadel St. Martin and the fort of La Prée, as on their side the French were besieging Rochelle.

D'Artagnan, as we have said, had become more tranquil, as always happens after a past danger, particularly when that danger seems to have vanished. He only felt one uneasiness, and that was at not hearing any tidings from his friends.

But one morning at the commencement of the month of November everything was explained to him by this letter, dated from Villeroy:—

M. d'Artagnan, — MM. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, after having had an entertainment at my house, and enjoying themselves very much, created such a disturbance that the provost

of the castle, a very rigid man, has ordered them to be confined for some days; but I accomplish the order they have given me by forwarding to you a dozen bottles of my Anjou wine, with which they are much pleased. They are desirous that you should drink to their health in their favorite wine. I have done this, and am, Monsieur, with great respect,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

GODEAU, *Purveyor of the Musketeers.*

"That's all well!" cried D'Artagnan. "They think of me in their pleasures, as I thought of them in my troubles. Well, I will certainly drink to their health with all my heart, but I will not drink alone."

And D'Artagnan went among those guardsmen with whom he had formed greater intimacy than with the others, to invite them to enjoy with him this present of delicious Anjou wine which had been sent him from Villeroy.

One of the two guardsmen was engaged that evening, and another the next, so the meeting was fixed for the day after that.

The hour of the banquet being come, the two guests arrived, took their places, and the dishes were arranged upon the table. Planchet waited, towel on arm; Fourreau uncorked the bottles; and Brisemont, which was the name of the convalescent, poured the wine, which was a little shaken by its journey, carefully into decanters. Of this wine, the first bottle being a little thick at the bottom, Brisemont poured the lees into a glass, and D'Artagnan desired him to drink it, for the poor devil had not yet recovered his strength.

The guests having eaten the soup, were about to lift the first glass of wine to their lips, when all at once the cannon sounded from Fort Louis and Fort Neuf. The guardsmen, imagining this to be caused by some unexpected attack, either of the besieged or the English, sprang to their swords. D'Artagnan, not less forward than they, did likewise, and all ran out, in order to repair to their posts.

But scarcely were they out of the room than they were made aware of the cause of this noise. Cries of "Live the king! Live the cardinal!" resounded on every side, and the drums were beaten in all directions.

In short, the king, impatient as has been said, had come by forced marches, and had that moment arrived with all his household and a reinforcement of ten thousand troops. His Musketeers preceded and followed him. D'Artagnan, placed in line with his company, saluted with an expressive gesture his three friends, whose eyes soon discovered him, and M. de Tréville, who detected him at once.

The ceremony of reception over, the four friends were soon in one another's arms.

"*Pardieu!*" cried D'Artagnan, "you could not have arrived in better time; the dinner cannot have had time

to get cold! Can it, gentlemen?" added the young man, turning to the two guards, whom he introduced to his friends.

"Ah, ah!" said Porthos, "it appears we are feasting!"

"I hope," said Aramis, "there are no women at your dinner."

"Is there any drinkable wine in your tavern?" asked Athos.

"Well, *pardieu!* there is yours, my dear friend," replied D'Artagnan.

"Our wine!" said Athos, astonished.

"Yes, that you sent me."

"We send you wine?"

"You know very well, — the wine from the hills of Anjou."

"Yes, I know what brand you are talking about."

"The wine you prefer."

"Doubtless, when I have neither champagne nor chambertin."

"Well, in the absence of champagne and chambertin,

"My faith! never mind where it comes from," said Porthos, "let us taste it, and if it is good, let us drink it."

"No," said Athos; "don't let us drink wine which comes from an unknown source."

"You are right, Athos," said D'Artagnan. "Did none of you charge your purveyor, Godeau, to send me some wine?"

"No! And yet you say he has sent you some as from us?"

"Here is his letter," said D'Artagnan, and he presented the note to his comrades.

"That is not his writing!" said Athos. "I am acquainted with it; before we left Villeroy I settled the accounts of the regiment."

"A false letter altogether," said Porthos, "we have not been disciplined."

"D'Artagnan," said Aramis, in a reproachful tone, "how could you believe that we had made a disturbance?"

D'Artagnan grew pale, and a convulsive trembling shook all his limbs.

"Thou alarmest me!" said Athos, who never used *thee* and *thou* but upon very particular occasions, "what has happened?"

"Look you, my friends!" cried D'Artagnan, "a horrible suspicion crosses my mind! Can this be another vengeance of that woman?"

It was now Athos who turned pale.

D'Artagnan rushed towards the refreshment-room, the three musketeers and the two guards following him.

The first object that met the eyes of D'Artagnan on entering the room was Brisemont, stretched upon the ground and rolling in horrible convulsions.

Planchet and Fourreau, as pale as death, were trying to give him succor; but it was plain that all assistance was useless, — all the features of the dying man were distorted with agony.

"Ah!" cried he, on perceiving D'Artagnan, "ah! this is frightful! You pretend to pardon me, and you poison me!"

"I!" cried D'Artagnan. "I, wretch? What do you say?"

"I say that it was you who gave me the wine; I say that it was you who desired me to drink it. I say you wished to avenge yourself on me, and I say that it is horrible!"

"Do not think so, Brisemont," said D'Artagnan; "do not think so. I swear to you, I protest —"

"Oh, but God is above! God will punish you! My God, grant that he may one day suffer what I suffer!"

"Upon the Gospel," said D'Artagnan, throwing himself down by the dying man, "I swear to you that the wine

than alive, — "ah, Monsieur, what an escape I have had!"

"How, sirrah! you were going to drink my wine?"

"To the health of the king, Monsieur; I was going to drink a small glass of it if Fourreau had not told me I was called."

"Alas!" said Fourreau, whose teeth chattered with terror, "I wanted to get him out of the way that I might drink by myself."

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, addressing the guardsmen, "you may easily comprehend that such a feast can only be very dull after what has taken place; so accept my excuses, and put off the party till another day, I beg of you."

The two guardsmen courteously accepted D'Artagnan's excuses, and perceiving that the four friends desired to be alone, retired.

When the young guardsman and the three musketeers were without witnesses, they looked at one another with an air which plainly expressed that each of them perceived the gravity of their situation.

"In the first place," said Athos, "let us leave this chamber; the dead are not agreeable company, particularly when they have died a violent death."

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "I commit the corpse, this poor devil to your care. Let him be interred in h ground. He committed a crime, it is true; but h is, pented of it."

And the four friends quitted the room, le ress," Planchet and Fourreau the duty of paying e; we honors to Brisemont.

The host gave them another chamber, and s e means with fresh eggs and some water, which Ath self to draw at the fountain. In a few and Aramis were posted as to the Porthos.

"Well," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "you see, my dear friend, that this is war to the death."

Athos shook his head.

"Yes, yes," replied he, "I perceive that plainly; but do you really believe it is she?"

"I am sure of it."

"Nevertheless, I confess I still doubt."

"But the *fleur-de-lis* on her shoulder?"

"She is some Englishwoman who has committed a crime in France, and has been branded in consequence."

"Athos, she is your wife, I tell you," repeated D'Artagnan; "only reflect how much the two descriptions resemble each other."

"Yes; but I should think the other must be dead, I hanged her so effectually."

It was D'Artagnan who now shook his head in his turn.

"But in either case, what is to be done?" said the young man.

"The fact is, one cannot remain thus, with a sword

"I like the means well enough," said D'Artagnan, "but where and how to meet with her?"

"Time, dear friend, time brings round opportunity; opportunity is the martingale of man. The more we have ventured the more we gain, when we know how to wait."

"Yes; but to wait surrounded by assassins and poisoners."

"Bah!" said Athos. "God has preserved us hitherto, God will preserve us still."

"Yes, we. Besides, we are men; and everything considered, it is our lot to risk our lives; but *she*," added he, in an undertone.

"What she?" asked Athos.

"Constance."

"Madame Bonacieux! Ah, that's true!" said Athos. "My poor friend, I had forgotten you were in love."

"Well, but," said Aramis, "have you not learned by the letter you found on the wretched corpse that she is in a convent? One may be very comfortable in a convent; and as soon as the siege of Rochelle is terminated, I promise you on my part —"

"Good," cried Athos, "good! Yes, my dear Aramis, we all know that your views have a religious tendency."

"I am only temporarily a musketeer," said Aramis, humbly.

"It is some time since he heard from his mistress," said Athos, in a low voice. "But take no notice; we know all about that."

"Well," said Porthos, "it appears to me that the means are very simple."

"What?" asked D'Artagnan.

"You say she is in a convent?" replied Porthos.

"Yes."

"Very well. As soon as the siege is over, we 'll carry her off from that convent."

"But we must first learn what convent she is in."

"That 's true," said Porthos.

"But I think I have it," said Athos. "Don't you say, dear D'Artagnan, that it is the queen who has made choice of the convent for her?"

"I believe so, at least."

"In that case Porthos will assist us."

"And how so, if you please?"

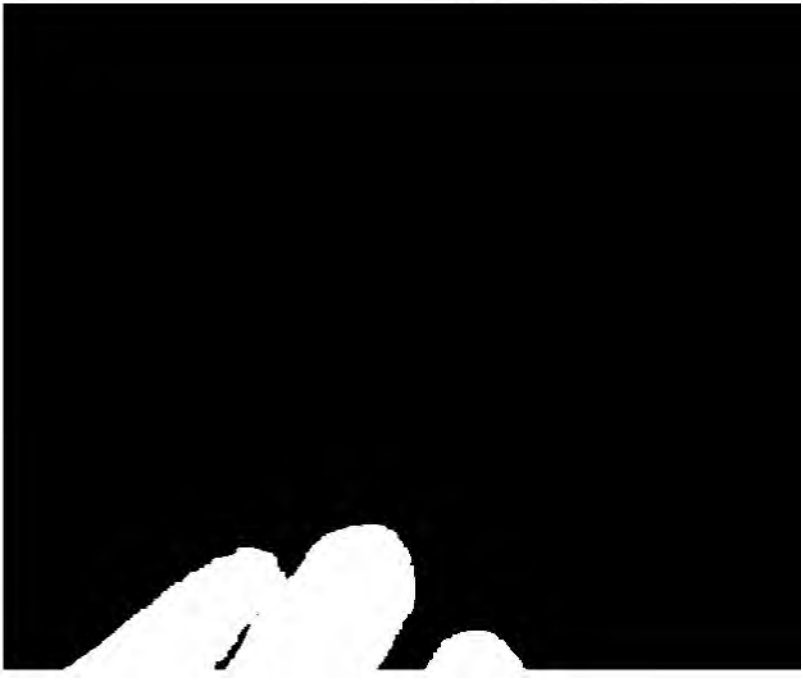
"Why, by your marchioness, your duchess, your princess. She must have a long arm."

"Hush!" said Porthos, placing a finger on his lips. "I believe her to be a cardinalist; she must know nothing of the matter."

"Then," said Aramis, "I take upon myself to obtain intelligence of her."

"You, Aramis?" cried the three friends. "You! And how?"

*Encounter with Richelieu near the Red Dovecot Inn*



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE INN OF THE RED DOVECOT.

MEANWHILE, the king, who, with more reason than the cardinal, showed his hatred for Buckingham, although scarcely arrived was in such haste to meet the enemy that he commanded every disposition to be made to drive the English from the Isle of Ré, and afterwards to press the siege of Rochelle; but notwithstanding his earnest wish, he was delayed by the dissensions which broke out between MM. Bassompierre and Schomberg, against the Duc d'Angoulême.

MM. Bassompierre and Schomberg were marshals of France, and claimed their right of commanding the army under the orders of the king; but the cardinal, who feared that Bassompierre, a Huguenot at heart, might press but feebly the English and Rochellais, his brothers in religion, supported the Duc d'Angoulême, whom the king, at his instigation, had named lieutenant-general. The result was that to prevent MM. Bassompierre and Schomberg from deserting the army, a separate command had to be given to each. Bassompierre took up his quarters on the north of the city, between Leu and Dompierre; the Duc d'Angoulême on the east, from Dompierre to Perigny; and M. de Schomberg on the south, from Perigny to Angoutin.

The quarters of Monsieur were at Dompierre; the quarters of the king were sometimes at Estrée, sometimes at Jarrie; the cardinal's quarters were upon the downs, at

the bridge of La Pierre, in a simple house without any intrenchment. So that Monsieur watched Bassompierre; the king, the Duc d'Angoulême; and the cardinal, M. de Schomberg.

As soon as this organization was established, they set about driving the English from the Isle.

The juncture was favorable. The English, who require, above everything, good living in order to be good soldiers, only eating salt meat and bad biscuit had many invalids in their camp. Still further, the sea, very rough at this period of the year all along the sea-coast, destroyed every day some little vessel; and the shore, from the point of L'Aiguillon to the trenches, was at every tide literally covered with the wrecks of pinnaces, *roberges*, and feluccas. The result was that even if the king's troops remained quietly in their camp, it was evident that some day or other, Buckingham, who only continued in the Isle from obstinacy, would be obliged to raise the siege.

But as M. de Toiras gave information that everything was preparing in the enemy's camp for a fresh assault, the

of cannon, and sixty flags, which were taken to Paris by Claude de Saint-Simon, and suspended with great pomp in the arches of Notre-Dame.

Te Deums were chanted in camp, and afterwards throughout France.

The cardinal was left free to carry on the siege, without having, at least at the present, anything to fear on the part of the English.

But it must be acknowledged, this repose was but momentary. An envoy of the Duke of Buckingham, named Montague, was taken, and proof was obtained of a league between the German Empire, Spain, England, and Lorraine. This league was directed against France.

Still further, in Buckingham's lodging, which he had been forced to abandon more precipitately than he expected, papers were found which confirmed this alliance, and which, as the cardinal asserts in his memoirs, strongly compromised Madame de Chevreuse, and consequently the queen.

It was upon the cardinal that all the responsibility fell, for one is not a despotic minister without responsibility. All, therefore, of the vast resources of his genius were at work night and day, engaged in listening to the least report heard in any of the great kingdoms of Europe.

The cardinal was acquainted with the activity, and more particularly the hatred, of Buckingham. If the league which threatened France triumphed, all his influence would be lost. Spanish policy and Austrian policy would have their representatives in the cabinet of the Louvre, where they had as yet but partisans; and he, Richelieu, — the French minister, the national minister, — would be ruined. The king, even while obeying him like a child, hated him as a child hates his master, and would abandon him to the personal vengeance of Monsieur and the queen. He would

then be lost, and France, perhaps, with him. All this must be prepared against.

Couriers, becoming every instant more numerous, succeeded one another, day and night, in the little house of the bridge of La Pierre, in which the cardinal had established his residence.

There were monks, who wore the frock with such an ill grace that it was easy to perceive they belonged to the church militant; women, a little inconvenienced by their costume as pages, and whose large trousers could not entirely conceal their rounded forms; and peasants with blackened hands but with fine limbs, savoring of the man of quality a league off.

There were also less agreeable visits, — for two or three times reports were spread that the cardinal had nearly been assassinated.

It is true that the enemies of the cardinal said that it was he himself who set these bungling assassins to work, in order to have, if wanted, the right of using reprisals; but we must not believe everything ministers say, nor

Now, one evening when D'Artagnan, who was in the trenches, was not able to accompany them, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, mounted on their battle-steeds, enveloped in their war-cloaks, with their hands upon their pistol-butts, were returning from a drinking-place called the Red Dovecot, which Athos had discovered two days before upon the route to Jarrie, following the road which led to the camp, and quite on their guard, as we have stated, for fear of an ambuscade, when, about a quarter of a league from the village of Boisnau, they fancied they heard the sound of horses approaching them. They immediately all three halted, closed in, and waited, occupying the middle of the road. In an instant, and as the moon broke from behind a cloud, they saw at a turning of the road two horsemen who, on perceiving them, stopped in their turn, appearing to deliberate whether they should continue their route or go back. The hesitation created some suspicion in the three friends, and Athos, advancing a few paces in front of the others, cried in a firm voice, "Who goes there?"

"Who goes there, yourselves?" replied one of the horsemen.

"That is not an answer," replied Athos. "Who goes there? Answer, or we charge."

"Beware of what you are about, gentlemen!" said a clear voice which seemed accustomed to command.

"It is some superior officer making his night-rounds," said Athos. "What do you wish, gentlemen?"

"Who are you?" said the same voice, in the same commanding tone. "Answer in your turn, or you may repent of your disobedience."

"King's musketeers," said Athos, more and more convinced that he who interrogated them had the right to do so.

"What company?"

"Company of Tréville."

"Advance, and give an account of what you are doing here at this hour."

The three companions advanced rather humbly, — for all were now convinced that they had to do with some one more powerful than themselves, — leaving Athos the post of speaker.

One of the two riders, he who had spoken second, was ten paces in front of his companion. Athos made a sign to Porthos and Aramis also to remain in the rear, and advanced alone.

"Your pardon, my officer," said Athos; "but we were ignorant with whom we had to do, and you may see that we were keeping good guard."

"Your name?" said the officer, who covered a part of his face with his cloak.

"But yourself, Monsieur," said Athos, who began to be annoyed by this inquisition, "give me, I beg you, the proof that you have the right to question me."

The cardinal fixed his piercing eyes on this courageous speaker.

"You have a quick ear, M. Athos," said the cardinal; "but now listen to this. It is not from mistrust that I request you to follow me, but for my security. Your companions are no doubt MM. Porthos and Aramis."

"Yes, your Eminence," said Athos, while the two musketeers who had remained behind advanced hat in hand.

"I know you, gentlemen," said the cardinal, "I know you. I know you are not quite my friends, and I am sorry you are not so; but I know you are brave and loyal gentlemen, and that confidence may be placed in you. M. Athos, do me then the honor to accompany me, you and your two friends, and then I shall have an escort to excite envy in his Majesty, if we should meet him."

The three musketeers bowed to the necks of their horses.

"Well, upon my honor," said Athos, "your Eminence is right in taking us with you; we have seen several ill-looking faces on the road, and we have even had a quarrel at the Red Dovecot with four of those faces."

"A quarrel, and what for, gentlemen?" said the cardinal; "you know I don't like quarrellers."

"And that is the reason why I have the honor to inform your Eminence of what has happened; for you might learn it from others, and upon a false account believe us to be in fault."

"What have been the results of your quarrel?" said the cardinal, knitting his brow.

"My friend Aramis, here, has received a slight sword-wound in the arm, but not enough to prevent him, as your Eminence may see, from mounting to the assault to-morrow if your Eminence orders an escalade."

"But you are not the men to allow sword-wounds to be inflicted upon you thus," said the cardinal. "Come, be frank, gentlemen, you have settled accounts with somebody! Confess; you know I have the right of giving absolution."

"I, Monseigneur?" said Athos. "I did not even draw my sword, but I took him who offended me round the body, and threw him out of the window. It appears that in falling," continued Athos, with some hesitation, "he broke his thigh."

"Ah, ah!" said the cardinal; "and you, M. Porthos?"

"I, Monseigneur, knowing that duelling is prohibited,—I seized a bench, and gave one of these brigands such a blow that I believe his shoulder is broken."

"Very well," said the cardinal; "and you, M. Aramis?"

"Monseigneur, being of a very mild disposition, and being likewise, of which Monseigneur perhaps is not aware, about to enter into orders, I endeavored to appease my

"Force her door!" said the cardinal, "and for what purpose?"

"To do her violence, without doubt," said Athos. "I have had the honor of informing your Eminence that these men were drunk."

"And was this lady young and handsome?" asked the cardinal, with a certain degree of anxiety.

"We did not see her, Monseigneur," said Athos.

"You did not see her? Ah, very well," replied the cardinal, quickly. "You did well to defend the honor of a woman; and as I am going to the Red Dovecot myself, I shall know if you have told me the truth."

"Monseigneur," said Athos, haughtily, "we are gentlemen, and to save our heads we would not be guilty of a falsehood."

"Therefore I do not doubt what you say, M. Athos, I do not doubt it for a single instant; but," added he, "to change the conversation, was this lady alone?"

"The lady had a cavalier shut up with her," said Athos, "but as notwithstanding the noise, this cavalier did not show himself, it is to be presumed that he is a coward."

"Judge not rashly, says the Gospel," replied the cardinal.

Athos bowed.

"And now, gentlemen, that's well," continued the cardinal. "I know what I wish to know; follow me."

The three musketeers passed behind his Eminence, who again enveloped his face in his cloak, and put his horse in motion, keeping from eight to ten paces in advance of his four companions.

They soon arrived at the silent, solitary inn. No doubt the host knew what illustrious visitor was expected, and had consequently sent intruders out of the way.

Ten paces from the door the cardinal made a sign to his esquire and the three musketeers to halt. A saddled horse was fastened to the window-shutter. The cardinal knocked three times, and in a peculiar manner.

A man, enveloped in a cloak, came out immediately, and exchanged some rapid words with the cardinal; after which he mounted his horse, and set off in the direction of Surgères, which was likewise the way to Paris.

"Advance, gentlemen," said the cardinal.

"You have told me the truth, my gentlemen," said he, addressing the musketeers, "and it will not be my fault if our encounter this evening be not advantageous to you. In the mean time, follow me."

The cardinal alighted; the three musketeers did likewise. The cardinal threw the bridle of his horse to his esquire; the three musketeers fastened their horses to the shutters.

The host stood at the door. For him, the cardinal was only an officer coming to visit a lady.

"Have you any chamber on the ground-floor where

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE UTILITY OF STOVE-PIPES.

It was evident that without suspecting it, and actuated solely by their chivalric and adventurous character, our three friends had just rendered a service to some one the cardinal honored with his special protection.

Now, who was that some one? That was the question the three musketeers put to one another. Then, seeing that none of their replies could throw any light on the subject, Porthos called the host and asked for dice.

Porthos and Aramis placed themselves at the table and began to play. Athos walked about in a contemplative mood.

While thinking and walking, Athos passed and re-passed before the pipe of the stove, broken in halves, the other extremity passing into the chamber above; and every time he passed and re-passed he heard a murmur of words, which at length fixed his attention. Athos went close to it, and distinguished some words that appeared to merit so great an interest that he made a sign to his friends to be silent, remaining himself bent with his ear directed to the opening of the lower orifice.

"Listen, Milady," said the cardinal, "the affair is important. Sit down, and let us talk it over."

"Milady!" murmured Athos.

"I listen to your Eminence with the greatest attention," replied a female voice which made the musketeer start.

"A small vessel with an English crew, whose captain is

on my side, awaits you at the mouth of the Charente, at Fort of the Point. He will set sail to-morrow morning."

"I must go thither to-night?"

"Instantly! That is to say, when you have received my instructions. Two men, whom you will find at the door on going out, will serve you as escort. You will allow me to leave first; then, after half-an-hour, you can go away in your turn."

"Yes, Monseigneur. Now let us return to the mission with which you wish to charge me; and as I desire to continue to merit the confidence of your Eminence, deign to unfold it to me in terms clear and precise, that I may not commit an error."

There was an instant of profound silence between the two interlocutors. It was evident the cardinal was weighing beforehand the terms in which he was about to speak, and that Milady was collecting all her intellectual faculties to comprehend the things he was about to say, and to engrave them in her memory when they should be spoken.

"Frankly and loyally," repeated Milady, with an unspeakable expression of duplicity.

"Yes, frankly and loyally," replied the cardinal, in the same tone. "All this negotiation must be carried on openly."

"I will follow your Eminence's instructions to the letter. I only wait till you give them."

"You will go to Buckingham in my behalf, and you will tell him I am acquainted with all the preparations he has made; but that they give me no uneasiness, since at the first step he takes I will ruin the queen."

"Will he believe that your Eminence is in a position to accomplish the threat thus made?"

"Yes; for I have the proofs."

"I must be able to present these proofs for his appreciation."

"Without doubt. And you will tell him I will publish the report of Bois-Robert and the Marquis de Beautru, upon the interview which the duke had at the residence of Madame the Constable with the queen, on the evening Madame the Constable gave a masquerade. You will tell him, in order that he may not doubt, that he came there in the costume of the Great Mogul, which the Chevalier de Guise was to have worn, and that he purchased this exchange for the sum of three thousand pistoles."

"Well, Monseigneur?"

"All the details of his coming into and going out of the palace — on the night when he introduced himself in the character of an Italian fortune-teller — you will tell him, that he may not doubt the correctness of my information; that he had under his cloak a large white robe dotted with black tears, death's heads, and cross-bones, — for in case of a surprise, he was to pass for the phantom of the White Lady who, as all the world knows,

appears at the Louvre every time any great event is impending."

"Is that all, Monseigneur?"

"Tell him also that I am acquainted with all the details of the adventure at Amiens; that I will have a little romance made of it, wittily turned, with a plan of the garden, and portraits of the principal actors in that nocturnal romance."

"I will tell him that."

"Tell him further, that I hold Montague in my power; that Montague is in the Bastille; that no letters were found upon him, it is true, but that torture may make him tell much of what he knows, and even what he does not know."

"Exactly."

"Then add that his Grace has, in the precipitation with which he quitted the Isle of Ré, forgotten and left behind him in his lodging a certain letter from Madame de Chevreuse which singularly compromises the queen,

replied Richelieu, with great bitterness. "Like the ancient paladins, he has only undertaken this war to obtain a look from his lady-love. If he becomes certain that this war will cost the honor, and perhaps the liberty, of the lady of his thoughts, as he says, I will answer for it he will look twice."

"And yet," said Milady, with a persistence that proved she wished to see clearly to the end of the mission with which she was about to be charged, — "and yet, if he persists?"

"If he persists?" said the cardinal. "That is not probable."

"It is possible," said Milady.

"If he persists —" His Eminence made a pause, and resumed: "If he persists — well, then I shall hope for one of those events which change the destinies of States."

"If your Eminence would quote to me some one of these events in history," said Milady, "perhaps I should partake of your confidence as to the future."

"Well, here, for example," said Richelieu: "when, in 1610, for a cause similar to that which moves the duke, King Henry IV., of glorious memory, was about, at the same time, to invade Flanders and Italy, in order to attack Austria on both sides. Well, did there not happen an event which saved Austria? Why should not the King of France have the same chance as the emperor?"

"Your Eminence means, I presume, the knife-stab in the Rue de la Féronnerie?"

"Precisely," said the cardinal.

"Does not your Eminence fear that the punishment inflicted upon Ravaillac may deter any one who might entertain the idea of imitating him?"

"There will be, in all times and in all countries, particularly if religious divisions exist in those countries,

fanatics who ask nothing better than to become martyrs. Ay, and observe, — it just occurs to me that the Puritans are furious against Buckingham, and their preachers designate him as the Antichrist."

"Well?" said Milady.

"Well," continued the cardinal, in an indifferent tone, "the only thing to be sought for at this moment is some woman, handsome, young, and clever, who has cause of quarrel with the duke. The duke has had many affairs of gallantry; and if he has fostered his amours by promises of eternal constancy, he must likewise have sown the seeds of hatred by his eternal infidelities."

"No doubt," said Milady, coolly, "such a woman may be found."

"Well, such a woman, who would place the knife of Jacques Clément or of Ravaillac in the hands of a fanatic, would save France."

"Yes; but she would then be the accomplice of an assassination."

"That is just," said Richelieu. "What do you require, then?"

"I require an order which would ratify beforehand all that I should think proper to do for the greatest good of France."

"But in the first place, this woman I have described must be found, who is desirous of avenging herself upon the duke."

"She is found," said Milady.

"Then the miserable fanatic must be found who will serve as an instrument of God's justice."

"He will be found."

"Well," said the cardinal, "then it will be time to claim the order which you just now required."

"Your Eminence is right," replied Milady; "and I have been wrong in seeing in the mission with which you honor me anything but that which it really is, — that is to say, to announce to his Grace, on the part of your Eminence, that you are acquainted with the different disguises by means of which he succeeded in approaching the queen during the fête given by Madame the Constable; that you have proofs of the interview granted at the Louvre by the queen to a certain Italian astrologer who was no other than the Duke of Buckingham; that you have ordered a little romance of a satirical nature to be written upon the adventures of Amiens, with a plan of the gardens in which those adventures took place, and portraits of the actors who figured in them; that Montague is in the Bastille, and that the torture may make him say things he remembers, and even things he has forgotten; that you possess a certain letter from Madame de Chevreuse, found in his Grace's lodging, which singularly compromises not only her who wrote it, but her in whose name it was written. Then, if he persists, notwithstand-

ing all this, — as that is, as I have said, the limit of my mission, — I shall have nothing to do but to pray God to work a miracle for the salvation of France. That is it, is it not, Monseigneur, and I shall have nothing else to do?"

"That is it," replied the cardinal, dryly.

"And now," said Milady, without appearing to remark the change of the duke's tone towards her, — "now that I have received the instructions of your Eminence as concerns your enemies, Monseigneur will permit me to say a few words to him of mine?"

"Have you enemies, then?" asked Richelieu.

"Yes, Monseigneur, enemies against whom you owe me all your support, for I made them by serving your Eminence."

"Who are they?" replied the duke.

"In the first place, there is a little *intrigante*, named Bonacieux."

"She is in the prison of Mantes."

"Her lover."

"What is his name?"

"Oh, your Eminence knows him well," cried Milady, carried away by her anger. "He is the evil genius of both of us. It is he who in an encounter with your Eminence's Guards decided the victory in favor of the king's Musketeers; it is he who gave three desperate wounds to De Wardes, your emissary, and who caused the affair of the diamond studs to fail; it is he who, knowing it was I who had Madame Bonacieux carried off, has sworn my death."

"Ah, ah!" said the cardinal, "I know of whom you speak."

"I mean that miserable D'Artagnan."

"He is a bold fellow," said the cardinal.

"And it is exactly because he is a bold fellow that he is the more to be feared."

"I must have," said the duke, "a proof of his connection with Buckingham."

"A proof?" cried Milady; "I will have ten."

"Well, then, it becomes the simplest thing in the world; get me that proof, and I will send him to the Bastille."

"So far good, Monseigneur; but afterwards?"

"When once in the Bastille, there is no afterwards!" said the cardinal, in a low voice. "Ah, *pardieu!*" continued he, "if it were as easy for me to get rid of my enemy as it is easy to get rid of yours, and if it were against such people you required impunity —"

"Monseigneur," replied Milady, "a fair exchange. Life for life, man for man; give me one, I will give you the other."

"I don't know what you mean, nor do I even desire to know what you mean," replied the cardinal; "but I wish

to please you, and see nothing out of the way in giving you what you demand with respect to so infamous a creature, — the more so as you tell me this paltry D'Artagnan is a libertine, a duellist, and a traitor."

"An infamous scoundrel, Monseigneur, a scoundrel!"

"Give me paper, a quill, and some ink, then," said the cardinal.

"Here they are, Monseigneur."

There was a moment of silence, which proved that the cardinal was employed in seeking the terms in which he should write the note, or else in writing it. Athos, who had not lost a word of the conversation, took his two companions by the hand, and led them to the other end of the room.

"Well," said Porthos, "what do you want, and why do you not let us listen to the end of the conversation?"

"Hush!" said Athos, speaking in a low voice. "We have heard all it was necessary we should hear; besides, I don't prevent you from listening, but I must be gone."

"You must be gone!" said Porthos; "and if the car-

fastenings of the shutters, in four words convinced the attendant of the necessity of a vanguard for their return, carefully examined the priming of his pistols, drew his sword, and took, like a forlorn hope, the road to the camp.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A CONJUGAL SCENE.

As Athos had foreseen, it was not long before the cardinal came down. He opened the door of the room in which the musketeers were, and found Porthos playing an earnest game at dice with Aramis. He cast a rapid glance round the room, and perceived that one of his men was missing.

"What is become of M. Athos?" asked he.

"Monseigneur," replied Porthos, "he is gone as a scout, on account of some words of our host, which made him believe the road was not safe."

tected by his esquire and the two musketeers, and return to Athos.

For a hundred paces he maintained the speed at which he started; but when out of sight he turned his horse to the right, made a circuit, and came back within twenty paces of a high hedge to watch the passage of the little troop. Having recognized the laced hats of his companions and the golden fringe of the cardinal's cloak, he waited till the horsemen had turned the angle of the road, and having lost sight of them, he returned at a gallop to the inn, which was opened to him without hesitation.

The host recognized him.

"My officer," said Athos, "has forgotten to give a piece of very important information to the lady, and has sent me back to repair his forgetfulness."

"Go up," said the host; "she is still in her chamber."

Athos availed himself of the permission, ascended the stairs with his lightest step, gained the landing, and through the open door perceived Milady putting on her hat.

He entered the chamber and closed the door behind him. At the noise he made in pushing the bolt, Milady turned round.

Athos was standing before the door, enveloped in his cloak, with his hat pulled down over his eyes. On seeing this figure, mute and immovable as a statue, Milady was frightened.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" cried she.

"Humph," murmured Athos, "it is certainly she!"

And letting fall his cloak and raising his hat, he advanced towards Milady.

"Do you know me, Madame?" said he.

Milady made one step forward, and then drew back as if she had seen a serpent.

"So far, well," said Athos. "I perceive you know me."

"The Comte de la Fère!" murmured Milady, becoming exceedingly pale, and drawing back till the wall prevented her from going any farther.

"Yes, Milady," replied Athos; "the Comte de la Fère in person, who comes expressly from the other world to have the pleasure of paying you a visit. Sit down, Madame, and let us talk, as the cardinal said."

Milady, under the influence of inexpressible terror, sat down without uttering a word.

"You certainly are a demon sent upon the earth!" said Athos. "Your power is great, I know; but you also know that with the help of God men have often conquered the most terrible demons. You have once before thrown yourself in my path. I thought I had crushed you, Madame; but either I was deceived, or hell has resuscitated you!"

Milady at these words, which recalled frightful remembrances, hung down her head with a suppressed groan.

"Yes, hell has resuscitated you," continued Athos.

pressive than a living creature, though a remembrance is sometimes devouring."

"But," said Milady, in a hollow, faint voice, "what brings you back to me, and what do you want with me?"

"I wish to tell you that though remaining invisible to your eyes, I have not lost sight of you."

"You know what I have done?"

"I can relate to you, day by day, your actions from your entrance into the service of the cardinal to this evening."

A smile of incredulity passed over the pale lips of Milady.

"Listen! It was you who cut off the two diamond studs from the shoulder of the Duke of Buckingham; it was you who had Madame Bonacieux carried off; it was you who, in love with De Wardes and thinking to pass the night with him, opened the door to M. d'Artagnan; it was you who, believing that De Wardes had deceived you, wished to have him killed by his rival; it was you who, when this rival had discovered your infamous secret, wished to have him killed in his turn by two assassins, whom you sent in pursuit of him; it was you who, finding the balls had missed their mark, sent poisoned wine with a forged letter, to make your victim believe that that wine came from his friends. In short, it was you who have but now in this chamber, seated in this chair I now fill, made an engagement with Cardinal Richelieu to cause the Duke of Buckingham to be assassinated, in exchange for the promise he has made you to allow you to assassinate D'Artagnan."

Milady was livid.

"You must be Satan!" cried she.

"Perhaps," said Athos; "but at all events listen well to this. Assassinate the Duke of Buckingham, or cause

him to be assassinated, — I care very little about that! I don't know him. Besides, he is an Englishman. But do not touch with the tip of your finger a single hair of D'Artagnan, who is a faithful friend whom I love and defend, or I swear to you by the head of my father the crime which you shall have endeavored to commit, or shall have committed, shall be the last."

"M. d'Artagnan has cruelly insulted me," said Milady, in a hollow tone; "M. d'Artagnan shall die!"

"Indeed! Is it possible to insult you, Madame?" said Athos, laughing; "he has insulted you, and he shall die?"

"He shall die!" replied Milady; "she first, and he afterwards."

Athos was seized with a kind of vertigo. The sight of this creature, who had nothing of the woman about her, recalled awful remembrances. He thought how one day, in a less dangerous situation than the one in which he was now placed, he had already endeavored to sacrifice her to his honor. His desire for blood returned, burning his brain, and pervading his frame like a raging fever; he

With another man, Milady might have preserved some doubt; but she knew Athos. Nevertheless, she remained motionless.

"You have one second to decide," said he.

Milady saw by the contraction of his countenance that the trigger was about to be pulled; she reached her hand quickly to her bosom, drew out a paper, and held it towards Athos.

"Take it," said she, "and be accursed!"

Athos took the paper, returned the pistol to his belt, approached the lamp to be assured that it was the paper, unfolded it, and read: —

Dec. 3, 1627.

It is by my order and for the good of the State that the bearer of this has done what he has done.

RICHELIEU.

"And now," said Athos, resuming his cloak, and putting on his hat, — "now that I have drawn your teeth, viper, bite if you can."

And he left the chamber without once looking behind him.

At the door he found the two men, and the spare horse which they held.

"Gentlemen," said he, "Monseigneur's order is, you know, to conduct that woman, without losing time, to the fort of the Point, and never to leave her till she is on board."

As these words agreed wholly with the order they had received, they bowed their heads in sign of assent.

With regard to Athos, he leaped lightly into the saddle, and set out at full gallop; only instead of following the road, he went across the fields, urging his horse to the utmost, and stopping occasionally to listen.

In one of those halts he heard the steps of several horses on the road. He had no doubt it was the cardinal and his escort. He immediately made a new point in advance, rubbed his horse down with some heath and leaves of trees, and placed himself across the road, about two hundred paces from the camp.

"Who goes there?" cried he, as soon as he perceived the horsemen.

"That is our brave musketeer, I think," said the cardinal.

"Yes, Monseigneur," said Porthos, "it is he."

"M. Athos," said Richelieu, "receive my thanks for the good guard you have kept. Gentlemen, we are arrived; take the gate on the left. The watchword is, King and Ré."

Saying these words, the cardinal saluted the three friends with an inclination of his head, and took the right hand, followed by his attendant, — for that night he himself slept in the camp.

the part of Athos. She might say that Athos had hung her; but then Athos would tell that she was branded. She thought it was best to preserve silence, to discreetly set off to accomplish her difficult mission with her usual skill; and then, all things being accomplished to the satisfaction of the cardinal, to come to him and claim her vengeance.

In consequence, after having travelled all night, at seven o'clock she was at the fort of the Point; at eight o'clock she had embarked; and at nine, the vessel, which with letters of marque from the cardinal was supposed to be sailing for Bayonne, raised anchor, and steered its course towards England.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE BASTION ST. GERVAIS.

On arriving at the lodgings of his three friends D'Artagnan found them assembled in the same chamber. Athos was meditating; Porthos was twisting his mustaches; Aramis was saying his prayers in a charming little Book of Hours, bound in blue velvet.

"*Pardieu*, gentlemen," said he. "I hope what you have to tell me is worth the trouble, or else, I warn you, I will not pardon you for making me come here instead of getting a little rest after a night spent in taking and dismantling a bastion. Ah, why were you not there, gentlemen? It was warm work."

"that the dike which the cardinal is making drives them all out into the open sea."

"But that is not quite what I mean to ask you, Aramis," replied Athos. "I want to know if you were left alone, and nobody interrupted you."

"Why, I think there were not many intruders. Yes, Athos, I know what you mean: we shall do very comfortably at the Parpaillot."

"Let us go to the Parpaillot, then, for here the walls are like sheets of paper."

D'Artagnan, who was accustomed to his friend's manner of acting, and who perceived immediately, by a word, a gesture, or a sign from him, that the circumstances were serious, took Athos's arm, and went out without saying anything. Porthos followed, chatting with Aramis.

On their way they met Grimaud. Athos made him a sign to come with them. Grimaud, according to custom, obeyed in silence; the poor lad had nearly come to the pass of forgetting how to speak.

They arrived at the drinking-room of the Parpaillot. It was seven o'clock in the morning, and daylight began to appear. The three friends ordered breakfast, and went into a room in which the host said they would not be disturbed.

Unfortunately, the hour was badly chosen for a private conference. The morning drum had just been beaten; every one shook off the drowsiness of night, and to dispel the humid morning air, came to take a drop at the inn. Dragoons, Swiss, guardsmen, musketeers, light-horsemen, succeeded one another with a rapidity which might answer the purpose of the host very well, but agreed badly with the views of the four friends. Thus they replied very curtly to the salutations, healths, and jokes of their companions.

"I see how it will be," said Athos: "we shall get into some pretty quarrel or other, and we have no need of one just now. D'Artagnan, tell us what sort of a night you have had, and we will describe ours afterwards."

"Ah, yes," said a light-horseman, with a glass of brandy in his hand, which he sipped slowly, — "ah, yes. I hear you gentlemen of the Guards have been in the trenches to-night, and that you did not get much the best of the Rochellais."

D'Artagnan looked at Athos to know if he ought to reply to this intruder who thus mixed unasked in their conversation.

"Well," said Athos, "don't you hear M. de Busigny, who does you the honor to ask you a question? Relate what has passed during the night, since these gentlemen desire to know it."

"Have you not taken a bastion?" said a Swiss, who was drinking rum out of a beer-glass.

"Yes, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, bowing, "we have

"But it is probable," said the light-horseman, "that they will send pioneers this morning to repair the bastion."

"Yes, that's probable," said D'Artagnan.

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "a wager!"

"Ah, *wooi*, a vager!" cried the Swiss.

"What is it?" said the light-horseman.

"Stop a bit," said the dragoon, placing his sabre like a spit upon the two large iron dogs which held the firebrands in the chimney, — "stop a bit, I am in it. You cursed host! a dripping-pan immediately, that I may not lose a drop of the fat of this estimable bird."

"You was right," said the Swiss; "goose-grease is kood with basdry."

"There!" said the dragoon. "Now for the wager! We listen, M. Athos."

"Yes, the wager!" said the light-horseman.

"Well, M. de Busigny, I will bet you," said Athos, "that my three companions, MM. Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan, and myself, will go and breakfast in the bastion St. Gervais, and we will remain there an hour, by the watch, whatever the enemy may do to dislodge us."

Porthos and Aramis looked at each other; they began to comprehend.

"But," said D'Artagnan, in the ear of Athos, "you are going to get us all killed without mercy."

"We are much more likely to be killed," said Athos, "if we do not go."

"My faith, gentlemen," said Porthos, turning round upon his chair, and twisting his mustache, "that's a fair bet, I hope."

"I take it," said M. de Busigny; "so let us fix the stake."

"You are four, gentlemen," said Athos, "and we are four; an unlimited dinner for eight. Will that do?"

"Capitally," replied M. de Busigny.

"Perfectly," said the dragoon.

"That shoots me," said the Swiss.

The fourth auditor, who, during all this conversation had played a mute part, made a sign of the head in proof that he acquiesced in the proposition.

"The breakfast for these gentlemen is ready," said the host.

"Well, bring it," said Athos.

The host obeyed. Athos called Grimaud, pointed to a large basket which lay in a corner, and made a sign to him to wrap the viands up in the napkins.

Grimaud understood that it was to be a breakfast on the grass, took the basket, packed up the viands, added the bottles, and then took the basket on his arm.

"But where are you going to eat my breakfast?" asked the host.

"What matter, if you are paid for it?" said Athos, and he threw two pistoles majestically on the table.

And bowing to all the astonished persons present, the young men took the road to the bastion St. Gervais, followed by Grimaud, who carried the basket, ignorant of where he was going, but in the passive obedience which Athos had taught him not even thinking of asking.

As long as they were within the circle of the camp, the four friends did not exchange one word; besides, they were followed by the curious, who, hearing of the wager, were anxious to know how they would come out of it. But when once they had passed the line of circumvallation, and found themselves in the open plain, D'Artagnan, who was completely ignorant of what was going forward, thought it was time to demand an explanation.

"And now, my dear Athos," said he, "do me the kindness to tell me where we are going?"

"Why, you see plainly enough we are going to the bastion."

"But what are we going to do there?"

"You know well that we go to breakfast there."

"But why did we not breakfast at the Parpaillot?"

"Because we have some very important matters to communicate to one another, and it was impossible to talk five minutes in that inn without being annoyed by all those importunate fellows, who keep coming in, saluting you, and addressing you. Here at least," said Athos, pointing to the bastion, "they will not come and disturb us."

"It appears to me," said D'Artagnan, with that prudence which allied itself in him so naturally with excessive bravery, — "it appears to me that we could have found some retired place on the downs or the sea-shore."

"Where we should have been seen all four conferring together, so that at the end of a quarter of an hour the cardinal would have been informed by his spies that we were holding a council."

"Yes," said Aramis, "Athos is right: *Animadvertuntur in desertis.*"

"A desert would not have been amiss," said Porthos; "but it behooved us to find it."

"There is no desert where a bird cannot pass over one's head, where a fish cannot leap out of the water, where a rabbit cannot come out of its burrow, and I believe that bird, fish, and rabbit each becomes a spy of the cardinal. Better then, pursue our enterprise; from which, besides, we cannot retreat without shame. We have made a wager, — a wager which could not have been foreseen, and of which I defy any one to divine the true cause. We are going, in order to win it, to remain an hour in the bastion. Either we shall be attacked, or not. If we are not, we shall have all the time to talk, and nobody will hear us, — for I guarantee the walls of the bastion have no ears; if we are, we will talk of our affairs just the same. Moreover, in defending ourselves, we shall cover ourselves with glory. You see that everything is to our advantage."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan; "but we shall indubitably

"What then?"

"The bodies were not plundered, were they? It appears the conquerors had something else to do."

"Well?"

"Well, we shall find their muskets, their cartridges, and their flasks; and instead of four musketoons and twelve balls, we shall have fifteen guns and a hundred charges to fire."

"Oh, Athos!" said Aramis, "truly you are a great man."

Porthos nodded in sign of agreement. D'Artagnan alone did not seem convinced.

Grimaud no doubt shared the misgivings of the young man, for seeing that they continued to advance towards the bastion, — something he had till then doubted, — he pulled his master by the skirt of his coat.

"Where are we going?" asked he, by a gesture.

Athos pointed to the bastion.

"But," said Grimaud, in the same silent dialect, "we shall leave our skins there."

Athos raised his eyes and his finger towards heaven.

Grimaud put his basket on the ground and sat down with a shake of the head.

Athos took a pistol from his belt, looked to see if it was properly primed, cocked it, and placed the muzzle close to Grimaud's ear.

Grimaud was on his legs again as if by a spring. Athos then made him a sign to take up his basket and to walk on first. Grimaud obeyed. All that Grimaud gained by this momentary pantomime was to pass from the rear-guard to the vanguard.

Arrived at the bastion, the four friends turned round.

More than three hundred soldiers of all kinds were assembled at the gate of the camp; and in a separate group

might be distinguished M. de Busigny, the dragoon, the Swiss, and the fourth bettor.

Athos took off his hat, placed it on the end of his sword, and waved it in the air.

All the spectators returned him his salute, accompanying this courtesy with a loud hurrah which was audible to the four; after which all four disappeared in the bastion, whither Grimaud had preceded them.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE COUNCIL OF THE MUSKETEERS.

As Athos had foreseen, the bastion was only occupied by a dozen corpses, French and Rochellais.

"Gentlemen," said Athos, who had assumed the command of the expedition, "while Grimaud spreads the table, let us begin by collecting the guns and cartridges together. We can talk while performing that necessary task. These gentlemen," added he, pointing to the bodies, "cannot hear us."

"But we could throw them into the ditch," said Porthos, "after having assured ourselves they have nothing in their pockets."

"Yes," said Athos, "that 's Grimaud's business."

"Well, then," cried D'Artagnan, "pray let Grimaud search them and throw them over the walls."

"Heaven forfend!" said Athos; "they may serve us."

"These bodies serve us?" said Porthos. "You are mad, dear friend."

"Judge not rashly, say the Gospel and the cardinal," replied Athos. "How many guns, gentlemen?"

"Twelve," replied Aramis.

"How many shots?"

"A hundred."

"That 's quite as many as we shall want. Let us load the guns."

The four musketeers went to work; and as they were

loading the last musket Grimaud announced that the breakfast was ready.

Athos replied, always by gestures, that that was well, and indicated to Grimaud, by pointing to a kind of pepper-castor, that he was to stand as sentinel. Only, to alleviate the tediousness of the duty, Athos allowed him to take a loaf, two cutlets, and a bottle of wine.

"And now, to table," said Athos.

The four friends seated themselves on the ground with their legs crossed like Turks, or even tailors.

"And now," said D'Artagnan, "as there is no longer any fear of being overheard, I hope you are going to let me into your secret."

"I hope at the same time to procure you amusement and glory, gentlemen," said Athos. "I have induced you to take a charming promenade; here is a delicious breakfast; and yonder are five hundred persons, as you may see through the loopholes, taking us for heroes or madmen, — two classes of imbeciles greatly resembling each other."

"But the secret!" said D'Artagnan.

"Not so bad yet," replied Athos; "for by this time she must have quitted the shores of France."

D'Artagnan breathed again.

"But after all," asked Porthos, "who is Milady?"

"A charming woman!" said Athos, sipping a glass of sparkling wine. "Villanous host!" cried he, "he has given us Anjou wine instead of champagne, and fancies we know no better! Yes," continued he, "a charming woman, who entertained kind views towards our friend D'Artagnan, who, on his part, has given her some offence for which she tried to revenge herself a month ago by having him killed by two musket-shots, a week ago by trying to poison him, and yesterday by demanding his head of the cardinal."

"What! by demanding my head of the cardinal?" cried D'Artagnan, pale with terror.

"Yes, that is as true as the Gospel," said Porthos; "I heard her with my own ears."

"I also," said Aramis.

"Then," said D'Artagnan, letting his arm fall with discouragement, "it is useless to struggle longer. I may as well blow my brains out, and all will be over."

"That's the last folly to be committed," said Athos, "seeing it is the only one for which there is no remedy."

"But I can never escape," said D'Artagnan, "with such enemies. First, my unknown man of Meung; then De Wardes, to whom I have given three sword-wounds; next Milady, whose secret I have discovered; finally, the cardinal, whose vengeance I have balked."

"Well," said Athos, "that only makes four; and we are four, — one for one. *Pardieu!* if we may believe the signs Grimaud is making, we are about to have to do with a very different number of people. What is it, Grimaud? Considering the gravity of the occasion, I

permit you to speak, my friend; but be laconic, I beg. What do you see?"

"A troop."

"Of how many persons?

"Twenty men."

"What sort of men?"

"Sixteen pioneers, four soldiers."

"How far distant?"

"Five hundred paces."

"Good! We have just time to finish this fowl, and to drink one glass of wine to your health, D'Artagnan!"

"To your health!" repeated Porthos and Aramis.

"Well, then, to my health! although I am very much afraid that your good wishes will not be of great service to me."

"Bah!" said Athos, "God is great, as say the followers of Mahomet, and the future is in his hands."

Then, swallowing the contents of his glass, which he put down close to him, Athos arose carelessly, took the musket next to him, and drew near to one of the loop-

advancing very resolutely. Besides, in addition to the pioneers, there are four soldiers and a brigadier, armed with muskets."

"That 's because they don't see us," said Athos.

"My faith," said Aramis, "I must confess I feel a great repugnance to fire on these poor devils of civilians."

"He is a bad priest," said Porthos, "who has pity for heretics!"

"In truth," said Athos, "Aramis is right. I will warn them."

"What the devil are you going to do?" cried D'Artagnan, "you will be shot, my dear."

But Athos heeded not his advice. Mounting on the breach, with his musket in one hand, and his hat in the other, he said, bowing courteously, and addressing the soldiers and the pioneers, who, astonished at this apparition, stopped fifty paces from the bastion: "Gentlemen, a few friends and myself are about to breakfast in this bastion. Now, you know nothing is more disagreeable than being disturbed when one is at breakfast. We request you, then, if you really have business here, to wait till we have finished our repast, or to come again a short time hence; unless, which would be far better, you form the salutary resolution to quit the side of the rebels, and come and drink with us to the health of the King of France."

"Take care, Athos!" cried D'Artagnan; "don't you see they are aiming?"

"Yes, yes," said Athos; "but they are only civilians, — very bad marksmen, who will be sure not to hit me."

In fact, at the same instant four shots were fired, and the balls were flattened against the wall around Athos, but not one touched him.

Four shots replied to them almost instantaneously, but

much better aimed than those of the aggressors; three soldiers fell dead, and one of the pioneers was wounded.

"Grimaud," said Athos, still on the breach, "another musket!"

Grimaud immediately obeyed. On their part, the three friends had re-loaded their arms; a second discharge followed the first. The brigadier and two pioneers fell dead; the rest of the troop took to flight.

"Now, gentlemen, a *sortie!*" cried Athos.

And the four friends rushed out of the fort, gained the field of battle, picked up the four muskets of the privates and the half-pike of the brigadier, and convinced that the fugitives would not stop till they reached the city, turned again towards the bastion, bearing with them the trophies of their victory.

"Re-load the muskets, Grimaud," said Athos, "and we, gentlemen, will go on with our breakfast, and resume our conversation. Where were we?"

"I recollect you were saying," said D'Artagnan, "that

may see that they have to deal with brave and loyal soldiers of the king."

Grimaud obeyed without replying. An instant afterwards, the white flag was floating over the heads of the four friends. A thunder of applause saluted its appearance; half the camp was at the barrier.

"How?" replied D'Artagnan, "you care little if she kills Buckingham, or causes him to be killed? But the duke is our friend."

"The duke is English; the duke fights against us. Let her do what she likes with the duke; I care no more about him than an empty bottle." And Athos threw fifteen paces from him an empty bottle from which he had poured the last drop into his glass.

"A moment," said D'Artagnan. "I will not abandon Buckingham thus. He gave us some very fine horses."

"And moreover, very handsome saddles," said Porthos, who at the moment wore on his cloak the lace of his own.

"Besides," said Aramis, "God desires the conversion and not the death of a sinner."

"Amen!" said Athos, "and we will return to that subject later, if such be your pleasure; but what for the moment engaged my attention most earnestly, and I am sure you will understand me, D'Artagnan, was the getting from this woman a kind of *carte blanche* which she had extorted from the cardinal, and by means of which she could with impunity get rid of you and perhaps of us."

"But this creature must be a demon!" said Porthos, holding out his plate to Aramis, who was cutting up a fowl.

"And this *carte blanche*," said D'Artagnan, — "this *carte blanche*, does it remain in her hands?"

"No, it passed into mine; I will not say without trouble, for if I did I should tell a lie."

"My dear Athos, I shall no longer count the number of times I am indebted to you for my life."

"Then it was to go to her that you left us?" said Aramis.

"Exactly."

"And you have that letter of the cardinal?" said D'Artagnan.

"Here it is," said Athos; and he took the invaluable paper from the pocket of his uniform. D'Artagnan unfolded it with one hand, whose trembling he did not even attempt to conceal, and read: —

Dec. 3, 1627.

It is by my order and for the good of the State that the bearer of this has done what he has done.

RICHELIEU.

"In fact," said Aramis, "it is an absolution according to rule."

"That paper must be torn to pieces," said D'Artagnan,

"Go to! It appears to me you make dull jokes, my dear," said Porthos.

"I do not jest," said Athos.

"Do you know," said Porthos, "that to twist that damned Milady's neck would be a smaller sin than to twist those of these poor devils of Huguenots, who have committed no other crime than singing in French the psalms we sing in Latin?"

"What says the abbé?" asked Athos, quietly.

"I say I am entirely of Porthos's opinion," replied Aramis.

"And I too," said D'Artagnan.

"Fortunately, she is far off," said Porthos, "for I confess she would worry me if she were here."

"She worries me in England as well as in France," said Athos.

"She worries me everywhere," said D'Artagnan.

"But when you held her in your power, why did you not drown her, strangle her, hang her?" said Porthos. "It is only the dead who do not return."

"You think so, Porthos?" replied the musketeer, with a sad smile which D'Artagnan alone understood.

"I have an idea," said D'Artagnan.

"What is it?" said the musketeers.

"To arms!" cried Grimaud.

The young men sprang up, and seized their muskets.

This time a small troop advanced, consisting of from twenty to twenty-five men; but they were not pioneers, they were soldiers of the garrison.

"Shall we return to the camp?" said Porthos. "I don't think the sides are equal."

"Impossible, for three reasons," replied Athos. "The first, that we have not finished breakfast; the second, that we have still some very important things to say; and the

third, that it yet wants ten minutes before the lapse of the hour."

"Well, then," said Aramis, "we must form a plan of battle."

"That 's very simple," replied Athos. "As soon as the enemy are within musket-shot, we must fire upon them. If they continue to advance, we must fire again. We must fire as long as we have loaded guns. If those who remain of the troop persist in coming to the assault, we will allow the besiegers to get as far as the ditch, and then we will push down upon their heads that strip of wall which keeps its perpendicular by a miracle."

"Bravo!" cried Porthos. "Decidedly, Athos, you were born to be a general, and the cardinal, who fancies himself a great soldier, is nothing beside you."

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "no divided attention, I beg; let each one pick out his man."

"I cover mine," said D'Artagnan.

"And I mine," said Porthos.

"And I *idem*," said Aramis.

them, but did not stop them; they jumped into the ditch, and prepared to scale the breach.

"Now, my friends," said Athos, "finish them at a blow. To the wall; to the wall!"

And the four friends, seconded by Grimaud, pushed with the barrels of their muskets an enormous sheet of the wall, which bent as if pushed by the wind, and detaching itself from its base, fell with a horrible crash into the ditch. Then a fearful cry was heard; a cloud of dust mounted towards the sky, — and all was over!

"Can we have destroyed them all, from the first to the last?" said Athos.

"My faith, it appears so!" said D'Artagnan.

"No," cried Porthos; "there go three or four, limping away."

In fact, three or four of these unfortunate men, covered with dirt and blood, fled along the hollow way, and at length regained the city. These were all who were left of the little troop.

Athos looked at his watch.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we have been here an hour, and our wager is won; but we will be fair players. Besides, D'Artagnan has not told us his idea yet."

And the musketeer, with his usual coolness, re-seated himself before the remains of the breakfast.

"My idea?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes; you said you had an idea," said Athos.

"Oh, I remember," said D'Artagnan. "Well, I will go to England a second time; I will go and find Buckingham."

"You shall not do that, D'Artagnan," said Athos, coolly.

"And why not? Have I not been there once?"

"Yes; but at that period we were not at war. At that

period Buckingham was an ally, and not an enemy. What you would now do amounts to treason."

D'Artagnan perceived the force of this reasoning, and was silent.

"But," said Porthos, "I think I have an idea, in my turn."

"Silence for M. Porthos's idea!" said Aramis.

"I will ask leave of absence of M. de Tréville, on some pretext or other which you must invent; I am not very clever at pretexts. Milady does not know me; I will get access to her without her suspecting me, and when I catch my beauty, I will strangle her."

"Well," replied Athos, "I am not far from approving the idea of M. Porthos."

"For shame!" said Aramis. "Kill a woman? No, listen to me; I have the true idea."

"Let us see your idea, Aramis," said Athos, who felt much deference for the young musketeer.

"We must inform the queen."

"Ah, my faith, yes!" said Porthos and D'Artagnan, at

nobody but one of ourselves is trustworthy; that two hours after the messenger has set out, all the capuchins, all the police, all the black caps of the cardinal, will know your letter by heart, and you and your clever person will be arrested."

"Without reckoning," objected Porthos, "that the queen would save M. de Buckingham, but would take no heed of us."

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "what Porthos says is full of sense."

"Ah, ah! but what 's going on in the city yonder?" said Athos.

"They are beating the general alarm."

The four friends listened, and the sound of the drum plainly reached them.

"You see, they are going to send a whole regiment against us," said Athos.

"You don't think of holding out against a whole regiment, do you?" said Porthos.

"Why not?" said the musketeer. "I feel myself quite in a humor for it; and I would hold out before an army if we had taken the precaution to bring a dozen more bottles of wine."

"Upon my word, the drum draws near," said D'Artagnan.

"Let it come," said Athos. "It is a quarter of an hour's journey from here to the city, consequently a quarter of an hour's journey from the city hither. That is more than time enough for us to devise a plan. If we go from this place we shall never find another so suitable. Ah, stop! I have it, gentlemen; the right idea has just occurred to me."

"Tell us."

"Allow me to give Grimaud some indispensable orders."

Athos made a sign for his lackey to approach.

"Grimaud," said Athos, pointing to the bodies which lay under the wall of the bastion, "take those gentlemen, set them up against the wall, put their hats upon their heads, and their guns in their hands."

"Oh, the great man!" cried D'Artagnan. "I comprehend now."

"You comprehend?" said Porthos.

"And do you comprehend, Grimaud?" said Aramis.

Grimaud made a sign in the affirmative.

"That 's all that is necessary," said Athos; "now for my idea."

"I should like, however, to comprehend," said Porthos.

"That is useless."

"Yes, yes! Athos's idea!" cried Aramis and D'Artagnan, at the same time.

"This Milady, this woman, this creature, this demon, has a brother-in-law, as I think you told me, D'Artagnan?"

"Yes, I know him very well; and I also believe that he has not a very warm affection for his sister-in-law."

"There is no harm in that. If he detested her it would

like that of the Magdalens, or of the Repentant Daughters. He must place his sister in one of these, and we shall be in peace."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "till she comes out."

"Ah, my faith!" said Athos, "you require too much, D'Artagnan. I have given you all I have, and I beg leave to tell you that this is the bottom of my sack."

"But I think it would be still better," said Aramis, "to inform the queen and Lord de Winter at the same time."

"Yes; but who is to carry the letter to Tours, and who to London?"

"I answer for Bazin," said Aramis.

"And I for Planchet," said D'Artagnan.

"Ay," said Porthos, "if we cannot leave the camp, our lackeys may."

"To be sure they may; and this very day we will write the letters," said Aramis. "Give the lackeys money, and they will start."

"We will give them money?" replied Athos. "Have you any money?"

The four friends looked at one another, and a cloud came over the brows which but lately had been so cheerful.

"Look out!" cried D'Artagnan, "I see black points and red points moving yonder. Why did you talk of a regiment, Athos? It is a veritable army!"

"My faith, yes," said Athos; "there they are. See the sneaks come, without drum or trumpet. Ah, ah! have you finished, Grimaud?"

Grimaud made a sign in the affirmative, and pointed to a dozen bodies which he had set up in the most picturesque attitudes. Some carried arms, others seemed to be taking aim, and the remainder appeared merely to be sword in hand.

"Brave!" said Athos; "that does honor to your imagination."

"All very well," said Porthos, "but I should like to understand."

"Let us decamp first, and you will understand afterwards."

"A moment, gentlemen, a moment; give Grimaud time to clear away the breakfast."

"Ah, ah!" said Aramis, "the black points and the red points are visibly enlarging. I am of D'Artagnan's opinion; we have no time to lose in regaining our camp."

"My faith," said Athos, "I have nothing more to say against a retreat. We betted upon one hour, and we have stayed an hour and a half. Nothing can be said; let us be off, gentlemen, let us be off!"

Grimaud was already ahead, with the basket and the dessert. The four friends followed, ten paces behind him.

"What the devil shall we do now, gentlemen?" cried Athos.

sides loud cries arose, — on the one side cries of anger, on the other cries of enthusiasm.

A second discharge followed the first, and three balls, by passing through it, made the napkin really a flag. Cries were heard from the camp, "Come down! come down!"

Athos came down; his friends, who anxiously awaited him, saw him return with joy.

"Come along, Athos, come along!" cried D'Artagnan; "now we have found everything except money, it would be stupid to be killed."

But Athos continued to march majestically, whatever remarks his companions made; and they, finding their remarks useless, regulated their pace by his.

Grimaud and his basket were far in advance, out of the range of the balls.

At the end of an instant they heard a furious fusillade.

"What 's that?" asked Porthos, "what are they firing at now? I hear no balls whistle, and I see nobody!"

"They are firing at the corpses," replied Athos.

"But the dead cannot return their fire."

"Certainly not! They will then fancy it is an ambuscade, they will deliberate; and by the time they have found out the pleasantry, we shall be out of the range of their balls. That renders it useless to get a pleurisy by too much haste."

"Oh, I comprehend now," said the astonished Porthos.

"That 's lucky," said Athos, shrugging his shoulders.

On their part, the French, on seeing the four friends return at such a step, uttered cries of enthusiasm.

At length a fresh discharge was heard, and this time the balls came rattling among the stones around the four friends, and whistling sharply in their ears. The Rochellais had at last taken possession of the bastion.

"These Rochellais are bungling fellows," said Athos; how many have we killed of them, — a dozen?"

"Or fifteen."

"How many did we crush under the wall?"

"Eight or ten."

"And in exchange for all that not even a scratch! Ah, but what is the matter with your hand, D'Artagnan? It bleeds, seemingly."

"Oh, it 's nothing," said D'Artagnan.

"A spent ball?"

"Not even that."

"What is it, then?"

We have said that Athos loved D'Artagnan like a child, and this sombre and inflexible personage felt the anxiety of a parent for the young man.

"Only grazed a little," replied D'Artagnan; "my fingers were caught between two stones, — that of the wall and that of my ring, — and the skin was broken."

"That comes of wearing diamonds, my master," said

says Monsieur the Abbé? I don't ask Porthos; his opinion has been given."

"Why, I think," said Aramis, blushing as usual, "that his ring not coming from a mistress, and consequently not being a love-token, D'Artagnan may sell it."

"My dear Aramis, you speak like theology personified. Your advice, then, is —"

"To sell the diamond," replied Aramis.

"Well, then," said D'Artagnan, gayly, "let us sell the diamond, and say no more about it."

The fusillade continued; but the friends were out of reach, and the Rochellais only fired to appease their consciences.

"My faith, it was time that idea came into Porthos's head. Here we are at the camp; therefore, gentlemen, not a word more of this affair. We are observed; they are coming to meet us. We shall be carried in triumph."

In fact, as we have said, the whole camp was in motion. More than two thousand persons had assisted, as at a spectacle, in this fortunate but wild undertaking of the four friends, — an undertaking of which they were far from suspecting the real motive. Nothing was heard but cries of "Live the Musketeers! Live the Guards!" M. de Busigny was the first to come and shake Athos by the hand, and acknowledge that the wager was lost. The dragoon and the Swiss followed him, and all their comrades followed the dragoon and the Swiss. There was nothing but felicitations, pressures of the hand, and embraces; there was no end to the inextinguishable laughter at the Rochellais. The tumult at length became so great that the cardinal fancied there must be some riot, and sent La Houdinière, his captain of the Guards, to inquire what was going on.

The affair was described to the messenger with all the effervescence of enthusiasm.

"Well?" asked the cardinal, on seeing La Houdinière return.

"Well, Monseigneur," replied the latter, "three musketeers and a guardsman laid a wager with M. de Busigny that they would go and breakfast in the bastion St. Gervais; and while breakfasting, they held it for two hours against the enemy, and have killed I don't know how many Rochellais."

"Did you inquire the names of those three musketeers?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"What are their names?"

"MM. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis."

"Still my three brave fellows!" murmured the cardinal. "And the guardsman?"

"D'Artagnan."

"Still my young scapegrace. Positively, these four men must be on my side."

four men are so much attached to one another, it is only fair that they should serve in the same company."

That same evening, M. de Tréville announced this good news to the three musketeers and D'Artagnan, inviting all four to breakfast with him next morning.

D'Artagnan was beside himself with joy. We know that the dream of his life had been to become a musketeer. The three friends were likewise greatly delighted.

"My faith," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "you had a triumphant idea! As you said, we have acquired glory, and were enabled to carry on a conversation of the highest importance."

"Which we can resume now without anybody suspecting us, for, with the help of God, we shall henceforth pass for cardinalists."

That evening D'Artagnan went to present his respects to M. d'Essart, and inform him of his promotion.

M. d'Essart, who esteemed D'Artagnan, made him offers of help, as this change would entail expenses for equipment.

D'Artagnan refused; but thinking the opportunity a good one, he begged him to have the diamond he put into his hand valued, as he wished to turn it into money.

The next day, by two o'clock, M. d'Essart's valet came to D'Artagnan's lodging, and gave him a bag containing seven thousand livres.

This was the price of the queen's diamond.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A FAMILY AFFAIR.

Athos had invented the phrase, *family affair*. A family affair was not subject to the investigation of the cardinal; a family affair concerned nobody. People might employ themselves in a family affair before all the world. Therefore Athos had invented the phrase, *family affair*.

Aramis had discovered the idea, *the lackeys*.

Porthos had discovered the means, *the diamond*.

D'Artagnan alone had discovered nothing, — he, ordinarily the most inventive of the four; but it must be also said that the very name of Milady paralyzed him.

Ah! no, we were mistaken; he had discovered a purchaser for his diamond.

In the evening, at the appointed hour the four friends met. There only remained three things to decide, — what they should write to Milady's brother; what they should write to the clever person at Tours; and which should be the lackeys to carry the letters.

Every one offered his own. Athos talked of the discretion of Grimaud, who never spoke a word but when his master unlocked his mouth. Porthos boasted of the strength of Mousqueton, who was big enough to thrash four men of ordinary size. Aramis, confiding in the address of Bazin, made a pompous eulogium on his candidate. Finally, D'Artagnan had entire faith in the bravery of Planchet, and reminded them of the manner in which he had conducted himself in the ticklish affair of Boulogne.

These four virtues disputed the prize for a length of time, and gave birth to magnificent speeches which we do not repeat here, for fear they should be deemed too long.

"Unfortunately," said Athos, "he whom we send must possess in himself alone the four qualities united."

"But where is such a lackey to be found?"

"Not to be found!" cried Athos. "I know it well; so take Grimaud."

"Take Mousqueton."

"Take Bazin."

"Take Planchet. Planchet is brave and shrewd; they are two qualities out of the four."

"Gentlemen," said Aramis, "the principal question is not to know which of our four lackeys is the most discreet, the most strong, the most clever, or the most brave; the principal thing is to know which loves money the best."

"What Aramis says is very sensible," replied Athos; "we must speculate upon the faults of people, and not

upon their virtues. Monsieur Abbé, you are a great moralist."

"Doubtless," said Aramis, "for we not only require to be well served in order to succeed, but moreover, not to fail; for in case of failure, heads are in question, not for our lackeys —"

"Speak lower, Aramis," said Athos.

"That 's wise, — not for the lackeys," resumed Aramis, "but for the master, — for the *masters*, we may say. Are our lackeys sufficiently devoted to us to risk their lives for us? No."

"My faith," said D'Artagnan, "I would almost answer for Planchet."

"Well, my dear friend, add to his natural devotedness a good sum of money, and then, instead of answering for him once, answer for him twice."

"Why, good God! you will be deceived just the same," said Athos, who was an optimist when things were concerned, and a pessimist when men were in question. "They will promise everything for the sake of the money.

"Speak lower!" said Athos.

— "of intrigues and secrets of State," continued D'Artagnan, complying with the recommendation. "There can be no doubt we would all be broken on the wheel; but for God's sake, do not forget, as you yourself said, Athos, that we only write to him concerning a family affair; that we only write to him to entreat that as soon as Milady arrives in London he will put it out of her power to injure us. I will write to him, then, nearly in these terms."

"Let us see," said Athos, assuming in advance a critical look.

"*Monsieur and dear friend* —"

"Ah, yes! *Dear friend* to an Englishman," interrupted Athos; "well commenced! Bravo, D'Artagnan! Only with that word you would be quartered, instead of being broken on the wheel."

"Well, perhaps. I will say, then, *Monsieur*, quite short."

"You may even say, *My Lord*," replied Athos, who stickled for propriety.

"*My Lord, do you remember the little goat-pasture of the Luxembourg?*"

"Good, *the Luxembourg!* One might believe this an allusion to the queen-mother! That's ingenious," said Athos.

"Well, then, we will put simply, *My Lord, do you remember a certain little enclosure where your life was spared?*"

"My dear D'Artagnan, you will never make anything but a very bad secretary. *Where your life was spared!* For shame! that's unworthy. A man of spirit is not to be reminded of such services. A benefit reproached is an offence committed."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan, "you are insupportable. If the letter must be written under your censure, my faith, I renounce the task."

"And you will do right. Handle the musket and the sword, my dear fellow. You will come off splendidly at those two exercises; but pass the pen over to Monsieur Abbé. That 's his province."

"Ay, ay!" said Porthos; "pass the pen to Aramis, who writes theses in Latin."

"Well, so be it," said D'Artagnan. "Draw up this note for us, Aramis; but by our Holy Father the Pope, cut it short, for I shall prune you in my turn, I warn you."

"I ask no better," said Aramis, with that ingenuous air of confidence which every poet has in himself; "but let me be properly acquainted with the subject. I have heard here and there that this sister-in-law was a hussy. I have obtained a proof of it by listening to her conversation with the cardinal."

"Lower! *sacrebleu!*" said Athos.

"But," continued Aramis, "the details escape me."

"And me also," said Porthos.

D'Artagnan and Athos looked at each other for some

say, — that she wanted to have her brother-in-law killed?"

"Yes."

"She was married?" asked Aramis.

"Yes."

"And her husband found out that she had a *fleur-de-lis* on her shoulder?" cried Porthos.

"Yes."

These three *yeses* had been pronounced by Athos, each with a sadder intonation.

"And who has seen this *fleur-de-lis?*" inquired Aramis.

"D'Artagnan and I. Or rather, to observe the chronological order, I and D'Artagnan," replied Athos.

"And does the husband of this frightful creature still live?" said Aramis.

"He still lives."

"Are you quite sure of it?"

"I am he."

There was a moment of cold silence, during which every one was affected according to his nature.

"This time," said Athos, first breaking the silence, "D'Artagnan has given us an excellent programme, and the letter must be written at once."

"The devil! You are right, Athos," said Aramis; "and it is a rather difficult matter. The chancellor himself would be puzzled how to write such a letter, and yet the chancellor draws up an official report very readily. Never mind! Be silent, I will write."

Aramis accordingly took the quill, reflected for a few moments, wrote eight or ten lines in a charming little female hand, and then with a voice soft and slow, as if each word had been scrupulously weighed, he read the following: —

My Lord, — The person who writes these few lines had the honor of crossing swords with you in the little enclosure of the Rue d'Enfer. As you have several times since declared yourself the friend of that person, he thinks it his duty to respond to that friendship by sending you important information. Twice you have nearly been the victim of a near relative whom you believe to be your heir, because you are ignorant that before she contracted a marriage in England she was already married in France. But the third time, which is the present, you may succumb. Your relative left Rochelle for England during the night. Watch her arrival, for she has great and terrible projects. If you require to know positively what she is capable of, read her past history on her left shoulder.

"Well, now that will do wonderfully well," said Athos. "My dear Aramis, you have the pen of a secretary of State. Lord de Winter will now be upon his guard, if the letter should reach him; and even if it should fall into the hands of the cardinal, we shall not be compromised. But as the lackey who goes may make us believe he has been to London, and may stop at Châtellerault, let us give him only half the sum promised him with the

"But, gentlemen, in all this," said D'Artagnan, "we do not think of the queen. Let us take some heed of the welfare of her dear Buckingham. That is the least we owe her."

"That 's true," said Athos; "but that concerns Aramis."

"Well," replied the latter, blushing, "what must I say?"

"Oh, that 's simple enough!" replied Athos. "Write a second letter for that clever personage who lives at Tours."

Aramis resumed his pen, reflected a little, and wrote the following lines, which he immediately submitted to the approbation of his friends.

"*My dear cousin.*"

"Ah, ah!" said Athos. "This clever person is your relative, then?"

"Cousin-german."

"Go on, to your *cousin*, then!"

Aramis continued:—

MY DEAR COUSIN, — His Eminence, the cardinal, whom God preserve for the happiness of France and the confusion of the enemies of the kingdom, is on the point of putting an end to the heretic rebellion of Rochelle. It is probable that the succor of the English fleet will never even arrive in sight of the place. I will even venture to say that I am certain M. de Buckingham will be prevented from setting out by some great event. His Eminence is the most illustrious politician of times past, of times present, and probably of times to come. He would extinguish the sun if the sun incommoded him. Give these happy tidings to your sister, my dear cousin. I have dreamed that the unlucky Englishman was dead. I cannot recollect whether it was by steel or by poison; only of this I am sure, I have dreamed he was dead, and you know my dreams never deceive me. Be assured, then, of seeing me soon return.

"Capital," cried Athos; "You are the king of poets, my dear Aramis. You speak like the Apocalypse, and

you are as true as the Gospel. There is nothing now to do but to put the address to this letter."

"That is easily done," said Aramis.

He folded the letter fancifully, and took up his pen and wrote: —

*To Mademoiselle Michon, seamstress, Tours.*

The three friends looked at one another and laughed; they were caught.

"Now," said Aramis, "you will please to understand, gentlemen, that Bazin alone can carry this letter to Tours. My cousin knows nobody but Bazin, and places confidence in nobody but him; any other person would fail. Besides, Bazin is ambitious and learned; Bazin has read history, gentlemen, he knows that Sixtus the Fifth became pope after having kept pigs. Well, as he means to enter the Church at the same time as myself, he does not despair of becoming pope in his turn, or at least a cardinal. You can understand that a man who has such views will never

*tagnan.* With that you may be satisfied he can make his way, both going and returning."

"In that case," said Athos, "Planchet must receive seven hundred livres for going, and seven hundred livres for coming back; and Bazin, three hundred livres for going, and three hundred livres for returning, — that will reduce the sum to five thousand livres. We will each take a thousand livres to be employed as seems good, and we will leave a fund of a thousand livres under the guardianship of Monsieur Abbé here, for extraordinary occasions or common wants. Will that do?"

"My dear Athos," said Aramis, "you speak like Nestor, who was, as every one knows, the wisest among the Greeks."

"Well, then," said Athos, "it is agreed. Planchet and Bazin shall go. Everything considered, I am not sorry to retain Grimaud; he is accustomed to my ways, and I am particular. Yesterday's affair must have shaken him a little; his voyage would upset him quite."

Planchet was sent for, and instructions were given him. The matter had been named to him by D'Artagnan, who in the first place pointed out the money to him, then the glory, and then the danger.

"I will carry the letter in the lining of my coat," said Planchet; "and if I am taken I will swallow it."

"Well, but then you will not be able to fulfil your commission," said D'Artagnan.

"You will give me a copy this evening, which I shall know by heart to-morrow."

D'Artagnan looked at his friends, as if to say, "Well, what did I tell you?"

"Now," continued he, addressing Planchet, "you have eight days to get an interview with Lord de Winter; you have eight days to return, — in all sixteen days. If, on the

sixteenth day after your departure, at eight o'clock in the evening you are not here, no money, — even if it be but five minutes past eight."

"Then, Monsieur," said Planchet, "you must buy me a watch."

"Take this," said Athos, with his usual careless generosity, giving him his own, "and be a good lad. Remember, if you talk, if you babble, if you get drunk, you risk your master's head, who has so much confidence in your fidelity, and who answers for you. But remember, also, that if by your fault any evil happens to D'Artagnan, I will find you, wherever you may be, for the purpose of ripping up your belly."

"Oh, Monsieur!" said Planchet, humiliated by the suspicion, and moreover, terrified at the calm air of the musketeer.

"And I," said Porthos, rolling his large eyes, "remember, I will skin you alive."

"Ah, Monsieur!"

said, that he might during the night learn the letter by heart. He gained just twelve hours by this engagement; he was to be back on the sixteenth day, by eight o'clock in the evening.

In the morning, as he was mounting his horse, D'Artagnan, who felt at the bottom of his heart a partiality for the duke, took Planchet aside.

"Listen," said he to him. "When you have given the letter to Lord de Winter, and he has read it, you will further say to him: *Watch over his Grace Lord Buckingham, for they wish to assassinate him.* But this, Planchet, is so serious and important that I have not informed my friends that I would intrust this secret to you; and for a captain's commission I would not write it."

"Be satisfied, Monsieur," said Planchet, "you shall see if confidence can be placed in me."

Mounted on an excellent horse, which he was to leave at the end of twenty leagues in order to take the post, Planchet set off at a gallop, his spirits a little depressed by the triple promise made him by the musketeers, but otherwise as light-hearted as possible.

Bazin set out the next day for Tours, and was allowed eight days for performing his commission.

The four friends, during the period of these two absences, had, as may well be supposed, the eye on the watch, the nose to the wind, and the ear on the hark. Their days were passed in endeavoring to catch all that was said, in observing the proceedings of the cardinal, and in looking out for all the couriers who arrived. More than once an involuntary trembling seized them when called upon for some unexpected service. They had, besides, to look constantly to their own proper safety; Milady was a phantom which, when it had once appeared to people, did not allow them to sleep very quietly.

On the morning of the eighth day, Bazin, fresh as ever, and smiling, according to custom, entered the cabaret of the Parpaillot as the four friends were sitting down to breakfast, saying, as had been agreed upon: "M. Aramis, the answer from your cousin."

The four friends exchanged a joyful glance; half of the work was done. It is true, however, that it was the shortest and the most easy part.

Aramis, blushing in spite of himself, took the letter, which was in a large, coarse hand, and not particular for its orthography.

"Good God!" cried he, laughing, "I quite despair of my poor Michon; she will never write like M. de Voiture."

"What does you mean by boor Michon?" said the Swiss, who was chatting with the four friends when the letter came.

"Oh, *pardieu*, less than nothing," said Aramis; "a charming little seamstress, whom I love dearly, and from whose hand I requested a few lines as a sort of

"And what dream does she mean?" asked the dragoon, who had approached during the reading.

"Yez; vhat 's the dream?" said the Swiss.

"Well, *pardieu!*" said Aramis, "it was only this: I had a dream, and I related it to her."

"Yez, yez," said the Swiss; "it 's simple enough to dell a dream, but I neffer dream."

"You are very fortunate," said Athos, rising; "I wish I could say as much!"

"Neffer," replied the Swiss, enchanted that a man like Athos could envy him anything. "Neffer, neffer!"

D'Artagnan, seeing Athos rise, did likewise, took his arm, and went out.

Porthos and Aramis remained behind to encounter the jokes of the dragoon and the Swiss.

As to Bazin, he went and laid down on a truss of straw; and as he had more imagination than the Swiss, he dreamed that Aramis, having become pope, adorned his head with a cardinal's hat.

But, as we have said, Bazin had not, by his fortunate return, removed more than a part of the uneasiness which weighed upon the four friends. The days of expectation are long, and D'Artagnan, in particular, would have wagered that the days were forty-four hours. He forgot the necessary slowness of navigation; he exaggerated to himself the power of Milady. He credited this woman, who appeared to him the equal of a demon, with agents as supernatural as herself; at the least noise, he imagined himself about to be arrested, and that Planchet was being brought back to be confronted with himself and his friends. Still further, his confidence in the worthy Picard, at one time so great, diminished day by day. This anxiety became so great that it even extended to Aramis and Porthos. Athos alone remained unmoved, as if no

danger hovered over him, and as if he breathed his customary atmosphere.

On the sixteenth day, in particular, these signs were so strong in D'Artagnan and his two friends that they could not remain quiet in one place, and wandered about like ghosts on the road by which Planchet was expected.

"Really," said Athos to them, "you are not men, but children, to let a woman terrify you so! And what does it amount to, after all? To be imprisoned. Well, but we should be taken out of prison; Madame Bonacieux was released. To be decapitated? Why, every day in the trenches we go cheerfully to expose ourselves to worse than that, — for a bullet may break a leg, and I am convinced a surgeon would give us more pain in cutting off a thigh than an executioner in cutting off a head. Wait quietly, then; in two hours, in four, in six hours at latest, Planchet will be here. He promised to be here, and I have very great faith in Planchet, who appears to me to be a very good lad."

"You are very fastidious," said Athos; "such a beautiful woman!"

"A woman of mark!" said Porthos, with his loud laugh.

Athos started, passed his hand over his brow to remove the drops of perspiration that burst forth, and rose in his turn with a nervous movement he could not repress.

The day, however, passed away; and the evening came on slowly, but finally it came. The bars were filled with drinkers. Athos, who had pocketed his share of the diamond, seldom quitted the Parpaillot. He had found in M. de Busigny, who, by the bye, had given them a magnificent dinner, a partner worthy of his company. They were playing together, as usual, when seven o'clock sounded; the patrol was heard passing to double the posts. At half-past seven the retreat was sounded.

"We are lost," said D'Artagnan, in the ear of Athos.

"You mean to say we *have* lost," said Athos, quietly, drawing four pistoles from his pocket, and throwing them upon the table. "Come, gentlemen," said he, "they are beating the tattoo. Let us to bed!"

And Athos went out of the Parpaillot, followed by D'Artagnan. Aramis came behind, giving his arm to Porthos. Aramis mumbled verses to himself, and Porthos from time to time pulled a hair or two from his mustache, in sign of despair.

But all at once a shadow appeared in the darkness the outline of which was familiar to D'Artagnan, and a well-known voice said, "Monsieur, I have brought your cloak; it is chilly this evening."

"Planchet!" cried D'Artagnan, beside himself with joy.

"Planchet!" repeated Aramis and Porthos.

"Well, yes, Planchet, to be sure," said Athos, "what is

there so astonishing in that? He promised to be back by eight o'clock, and eight is striking. Bravo, Planchet, you are a lad of your word, and if ever you leave your master, I will promise you a place in my service."

"Oh, no, never," said Planchet, "I will never leave M. d'Artagnan."

At the same time D'Artagnan felt that Planchet slipped a note into his hand.

D'Artagnan felt a strong inclination to embrace Planchet as he had embraced him on his departure; but he feared lest this mark of affection, bestowed upon his lackey in the open street, might appear extraordinary to passers-by, and he restrained himself.

"I have the note," said he to Athos and to his friends.

"That 's well," said Athos, "let us go home and read it."

The note burned the hand of D'Artagnan. He wished to hasten their steps; but Athos took his arm and passed it under his own, and the young man was forced to regu-

may claim your seven hundred livres, but you did not run much risk with such a note as that."

"I am not to blame for having tried every means to compress it," said Planchet.

"Well!" cried D'Artagnan, "tell us all about it."

"*Dame*, that 's a long job, Monsieur."

"You are right, Planchet," said Athos; "besides, the tattoo has been sounded, and we should be observed if we kept a light burning much longer than the others."

"So be it," said D'Artagnan. "Go to bed, Planchet, and sleep soundly."

"My faith, Monsieur! that will be the first time I have done so for sixteen days."

"And me too!" said D'Artagnan.

"And me too!" said Porthos.

"And me too!" said Aramis.

"Well, if you will have the truth, and me too!" said Athos.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### FATALITY.

Meantime Milady, drunk with passion, roaring on the deck like a lioness that has been embarked, had been tempted to throw herself into the sea that she might regain the coast, for she could not get rid of the thought that she had been insulted by D'Artagnan, threatened by Athos, and that she had quitted France without being revenged on them. This idea soon became so insupportable to her that at the risk of whatever terrible consequences might result to herself from it, she implored the captain to put her on shore; but the captain, eager to escape from his false position, — placed between French

thirteen days lost, — thirteen days, during which so many important events might pass in London. She reflected likewise that the cardinal would be furious at her return, and consequently would be more disposed to listen to the complaints brought against her than to the accusations she brought against others.

She allowed the vessel to pass Lorient and Brest without repeating her request to the captain who, on his part, took care not to remind her of it. Milady therefore continued her voyage, and on the very day that Planchet embarked at Portsmouth for France, the messenger of his Eminence entered the port in triumph.

All the city was agitated by an extraordinary movement. Four large vessels, recently built, had just been launched. At the end of the jetty, his clothes richly laced with gold, glittering, as was customary with him, with diamonds and precious stones, his hat ornamented with a white feather which drooped upon his shoulder, Buckingham was seen surrounded by a staff almost as brilliant as himself.

It was one of those rare and beautiful days in winter when England remembers that there is a sun. The star of day, pale, but nevertheless still splendid, was setting in the horizon, glorifying at once the heavens and the sea with bands of fire, and casting upon the towers and the old houses of the city a last ray of gold which made the windows sparkle like the reflection of a conflagration. Breathing that sea-breeze, so much more invigorating and balsamic as the land is approached, contemplating all the power of those preparations she was commissioned to destroy, all the power of that army which she was to combat alone, — she, a woman with a few bags of gold, — Milady compared herself mentally to Judith, the terrible Jewess, when she penetrated the camp of the Assyrians

and beheld the enormous mass of chariots, horses, men, and arms, which a gesture of her hand was to dissipate like a cloud of smoke.

They entered the roadstead; but as they drew near in order to cast anchor, a little cutter, looking like a coast-guard formidably armed, approached the merchant-vessel and dropped into the sea a boat which directed its course to the ladder. This boat contained an officer, a mate, and eight rowers. The officer alone went on board, where he was received with all the deference inspired by the uniform.

The officer conversed a few instants with the captain, gave him several papers, of which he was the bearer, to read, and upon the order of the merchant-captain the whole crew of the vessel, both passengers and sailors, were called upon deck.

When this species of summons was made the officer inquired aloud the point of the brig's departure, its route, its landings; and to all these questions the captain replied

power of this woman with eyes of flame in reading the hearts of those whose secrets she wished to divine, she met this time with a countenance of such impassibility that no discovery followed her investigation. The officer who had stopped in front of her and studied her with so much care might have been twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. He was of pale complexion, with clear blue eyes, rather deeply set; his mouth, fine and well cut, remained motionless in its correct lines; his chin, strongly marked, denoted that strength of will which in the ordinary Britannic type denotes mostly nothing but obstinacy; a brow a little receding, as is proper for poets, enthusiasts, and soldiers, was scarcely shaded by short thin hair which, like the beard which covered the lower part of his face, was of a beautiful deep chestnut color.

When they entered the port, it was already night. The fog increased the darkness, and formed round the sternlights and lanterns of the jetty a circle like that which surrounds the moon when the weather threatens to become rainy. The air they breathed was heavy, damp, and cold.

Milady, that woman so courageous and firm, shivered in spite of herself.

The officer desired to have Milady's packages pointed out to him, and ordered them to be placed in the boat. When this operation was complete, he invited her to descend by offering her his hand.

Milady looked at this man, and hesitated. "Who are you, sir," asked she, "who has the kindness to trouble yourself so particularly on my account?"

"You may perceive, Madame, by my uniform, that I am an officer in the English navy," replied the young man.

"But is it the custom for the officers in the English navy to place themselves at the service of their female com-

patriots when they land in a port of Great Britain, and carry their gallantry so far as to conduct them ashore?"

"Yes, Madame, it is the custom, not from gallantry but prudence, that in time of war foreigners should be conducted to particular hôtels, in order that they may remain under the eye of the government until full information can be obtained about them."

These words were pronounced with the most exact politeness and the most perfect calmness. Nevertheless, they had not the power of convincing Milady.

"But I am not a foreigner, sir," said she, with an accent as pure as ever was heard between Portsmouth and Manchester; "my name is Lady Clarik, and this measure —"

"This measure is general, Madame; and you will seek in vain to evade it."

"I will follow you, then, sir."

Accepting the hand of the officer, she began the descent of the ladder, at the foot of which the boat waited. The officer followed her. A large cloak was spread at the stern;

The officer saw that the baggage was fastened carefully behind the carriage; and this operation ended, he took his place beside Milady, and shut the door.

Immediately, without any order being given or his place of destination indicated, the coachman set off at a rapid pace, and plunged into the streets of the city.

So strange a reception naturally gave Milady ample matter for reflection; so seeing that the young officer did not seem at all disposed for conversation, she reclined in her corner of the carriage, and one after the other passed in review all the surmises which presented themselves to her mind.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, however, surprised at the length of the journey, she leaned forward towards the door to see whither she was being conducted. Houses were no longer to be seen; trees appeared in the darkness like great black phantoms chasing one another. Milady shuddered.

"But we are no longer in the city, sir," said she.

The young officer preserved silence.

"I beg you to understand, sir, I will go no farther, unless you tell me whither you are taking me."

This threat brought no reply.

"Oh, this is too much," cried Milady. "Help! help!"

No voice replied to hers; the carriage continued to roll on with rapidity; the officer seemed a statue.

Milady looked at the officer with one of those terrible expressions peculiar to her countenance, and which so rarely failed of their effect; anger made her eyes flash in the darkness.

The young man remained immovable.

Milady tried to open the door in order to throw herself out.

"Take care, Madame," said the young man, coolly, "you will kill yourself in jumping."

Milady re-seated herself, foaming. The officer leaned forward, looked at her in his turn, and appeared surprised to see that face, just before so beautiful, distorted with passion and almost hideous. The artful creature at once comprehended that she was injuring herself by allowing him thus to read her soul; she collected her features, and in a complaining voice said: —

"In the name of Heaven, sir, tell me if it is to you, if it is to your government, if it is to an enemy I am to attribute the violence that is done me?"

"No violence will be offered to you, Madame, and what happens to you is the result of a very simple measure which we are obliged to adopt with all who land in England."

"Then you don't know me, sir?"

"It is the first time I have had the honor of seeing you."

"And on [redacted]

man sprang lightly out and presented his hand to Milady, who leaned upon it, and in her turn alighted with tolerable calmness.

"Still, then, I am a prisoner," said Milady, looking around her, and bringing back her eyes with a most gracious smile to the young officer; "but I feel assured it will not be for long," added she. "My own conscience and your politeness, sir, are the guarantees of that."

However flattering this compliment, the officer made no reply; but drawing from his belt a little silver whistle, such as boatswains use in ships-of-war, he whistled three times, with three different modulations. Immediately several men appeared, who unharnessed the smoking horses, and put the carriage into a coach-house.

Then the officer, with the same calm politeness, invited his prisoner to enter the house. She, with a still smiling countenance, took his arm, and passed with him under a low arched door, which by a vaulted passage, lighted only at the farther end, led to a stone staircase around an angle of stone. They then came to a massive door, which after the introduction into the lock of a key which the young man carried with him, turned heavily upon its hinges, and disclosed the chamber destined for Milady.

With a single glance the prisoner took in the apartment in its minutest details. It was a chamber whose furniture was at once appropriate for a prisoner or a free man; and yet bars at the windows and outside bolts at the door decided the question in favor of the prison.

In an instant all the strength of mind of this creature, though drawn from the most vigorous sources, abandoned her; she sank into a large easy-chair, with her arms crossed, her head lowered, and expecting every instant to see a judge enter to interrogate her.

But no one entered except two or three marines, who

brought her trunks and packages, deposited them in a corner, and retired without speaking.

The officer superintended all these details with the same calmness Milady had constantly seen in him, never pronouncing a word himself, and making himself obeyed by a gesture of his hand or a sound of his whistle.

It might have been said that between this man and his inferiors spoken language did not exist, or had become useless.

At length Milady could hold out no longer; she broke the silence. "In the name of Heaven, sir," cried she, "what means all that is passing? Put an end to my doubts; I have courage enough for any danger I can foresee, for every misfortune which I understand. Where am I, and why am I here? If I am free, why these bars and these doors? If I am a prisoner, what crime have I committed?"

"You are here in the apartment destined for you, Madame. I received orders to go and take charge of

the threshold. He was without a hat, carried a sword, and flourished a handkerchief in his hand.

Milady thought she recognized this shadow in the gloom; she supported herself with one hand upon the arm of the chair, and advanced her head as if to meet a certainty.

The stranger advanced slowly, and as he advanced, after entering into the circle of light projected by the lamp, Milady involuntarily drew back.

Then when she had no longer any doubt, she cried, in a state of stupor, "What, my brother, is it you?"

"Yes, fair lady!" replied Lord de Winter, making a bow, half courteous, half ironical; "it is I, myself."

"But this castle, then?"

"Is mine."

"This chamber?"

"Is yours."

"I am, then, your prisoner?"

"Nearly so."

"But this is a frightful abuse of power!"

"No high-sounding words! Let us sit down and chat quietly, as brother and sister ought to do."

Then, turning towards the door, and seeing that the young officer was waiting for his last orders, he said, "All is well, I thank you; now leave us alone, Mr. Felton."

## CHAPTER XX.

### CHAT OF A BROTHER WITH A SISTER.

During the time which Lord de Winter took to shut the door, close a shutter, and draw a chair near to his sister-in-law's *fauteuil*, Milady, anxiously thoughtful, plunged her glance into the depths of possibility, and discovered all the plan, of which she could not even obtain a glance as long as she was ignorant into whose hands she had fallen. She knew her brother-in-law to be a worthy gentleman, a bold hunter, an intrepid player, enterprising with women, but by no means remarkable for his skill in intrigues. How had he discovered her arrival, and caused her to be seized?

ulated herself upon having fallen into the hands of her brother-in-law, with whom she reckoned she could deal very easily, rather than into the hands of an acknowledged and intelligent enemy.

"Yes, let us chat, Brother," said she, with a kind of cheerfulness, decided as she was to draw from the conversation, in spite of all the dissimulation Lord de Winter could bring, the revelations of which she stood in need to regulate her future conduct.

"You have then decided to come to England again," said Lord de Winter, "in spite of the resolutions you so often expressed in Paris, never to set your feet on British ground?"

Milady replied to this question by another question. "To begin with, tell me," said she, "how you have watched me so closely as to be aware beforehand not only of my arrival, but even of the day, the hour, and the port at which I should arrive?"

Lord de Winter adopted the same tactics as Milady, thinking that as his sister-in-law employed them they must be the best.

"But tell me, my dear sister," replied he, "what makes you come to England?"

"I come to see you," replied Milady, without knowing how much she aggravated by this reply the suspicions to which D'Artagnan's letter had given birth in the mind of her brother-in-law, and only desiring to gain the good-will of her auditor by a falsehood.

"Ah, to see me?" said De Winter, cunningly.

"To be sure, to see you. What is there astonishing in that?"

"And you had no other object in coming to England but to see me?"

"No."

"So it was for me alone you have taken the trouble to cross the Channel?"

"For you alone."

"The deuce! What tenderness, my sister!"

"But am I not your nearest relative?" demanded Milady, with a tone of the most touching ingenuousness.

"And my only heir, are you not?" said Lord de Winter in his turn, fixing his eyes on those of Milady.

Whatever command she had over herself, Milady could not help starting; and as in pronouncing the last words Lord de Winter placed his hand upon the arm of his sister, this start did not escape him.

In fact, the blow was direct and severe. The first idea that occurred to Milady's mind was that she had been betrayed by Kitty, and that she had recounted to the baron the selfish aversion towards himself of which she had imprudently allowed some marks to escape before her servant. She also recollected the furious and imprudent attack she had made upon D'Artagnan when he spared

more astonishing in all that I have said to you than in what you have told me?"

"No; what I think astonishing is that you should expect my coming."

"And yet that is the most simple thing in the world, my dear sister. Have you not observed that the captain of your little vessel, on entering the roadstead, sent forward, in order to obtain permission to enter the port, a little boat bearing his log-book and the register of his voyagers? I am commandant of the port. They brought me that book. I recognized your name in it. My heart told me what your mouth has just confirmed, — that is to say, with what view you have exposed yourself to the dangers of a sea so perilous, or at least so troublesome at this moment, — and I sent my cutter to meet you. You know the rest."

Milady knew that Lord de Winter lied, and she was the more alarmed.

"My brother," continued she, "was not that my Lord Buckingham whom I saw on the jetty this evening, as we arrived?"

"Himself. Ah, I can understand how the sight of him struck you," replied Lord de Winter. "You came from a country where he must be very much talked of, and I know that his armaments against France greatly engage the attention of your friend the cardinal."

"My friend the cardinal!" cried Milady, seeing that on this point as on the other Lord de Winter seemed well instructed.

"Is he not your friend?" replied the baron, negligently. "Ah, pardon! I thought so; but we will return to my Lord Duke presently. Let us not depart from the sentimental turn our conversation had taken. You came, you say, to see me?"

"Yes."

"Well, I reply that you shall be served to the height of your wishes, and that we shall see each other every day."

"Am I then to remain here eternally?" demanded Milady, with a certain terror.

"Do you find yourself badly lodged, Sister? Demand anything you want, and I will hasten to have you furnished with it."

"But I have neither my women nor my servants."

"You shall have all, Madame. Tell me on what footing your household was established by your first husband, and although I am only your brother-in-law, I will arrange one similar."

"My first husband!" cried Milady, looking at Lord de Winter with eyes almost starting from their sockets.

"Yes, your French husband. I don't speak of my brother. If you have forgotten, as he is still living, I can write to him and he will send me information on the subject."

"Insolent!" cried Milady; and as if acted upon by a spring, she bounded towards the baron, who awaited her attack with his arms crossed, but nevertheless with one hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Come!" said he. "I know you are accustomed to assassinate people; but I warn you I shall defend myself, even against you."

"You are right," said Milady. "You have all the appearance of being cowardly enough to lift your hand against a woman."

"Perhaps so; and I have an excuse, for mine would not be the first hand of a man that has been placed upon you, I imagine."

And the baron pointed, with a slow and accusing gesture, to the left shoulder of Milady, which he almost touched with his finger.

Milady uttered a deep inward shriek, and retreated to a corner of the room like a panther which crouches for a spring.

"Oh, growl as much as you please," cried Lord de Winter, "but don't try to bite, for I warn you that it would be to your disadvantage. There are here no procurators who regulate successions beforehand. There is no knight-errant to come and seek a quarrel with me on account of the fair lady I detain a prisoner; but I have judges quite ready who will quickly dispose of a woman so shameless as to glide, a bigamist, into the bed of Lord de Winter, my brother. And these judges, I warn you, will soon send you to an executioner who will make both your shoulders alike."

The eyes of Milady darted such flashes that although he was a man and armed before an unarmed woman, he felt the chill of fear glide through his whole frame. However, he continued all the same, but with increasing

"Yes."

"Well, I reply that you shall be served [illegible] of your wishes, and that we shall see each [illegible] day."

"Am I then to remain here eternally [illegible]" Milady, with a certain terror.

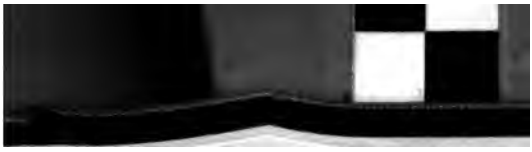
"Do you find yourself badly lodged, [illegible] anything you want, and I will hasten [illegible] nished with it."

"But I have neither my women nor [illegible]"

"You shall have all, Madame. Tell [illegible] your household was established by your [illegible] although I am only your brother-in-law, [illegible] similar."

"My first husband!" cried Milady, [illegible] Winter with eyes almost starting from [illegible]

"Yes, your French husband. I [illegible] brother. If you have forgotten, as [illegible] can write to him and he will send [illegible] subject."





are saying to yourself: 'Fifteen days, ...! I have an inventive mind; before ... some idea will occur to me. I have an ... I shall meet with a victim. Before fif... by I shall be away from here.' Ah,

...ing her thoughts betrayed, dug her nails ... subdue every emotion that might give to ...pression except agony.

...nter continued: "The officer who com... my absence you have already seen, and ...w him. He knows how, as you must have ...bey an order, — for you did not, I am sure, ... Portsmouth hither without endeavoring to ... speak. What do you say of him? Could a ...arble have been more impassible and more ... You have already tried the power of your seduc... many men, and unfortunately you have always ...; but I give you leave to try them upon this *...rdien!* if you succeed with him, I pronounce you ...on himself."

...nt towards the door and opened it hastily.

...i Mr. Felton," said he. "Wait a minute longer, ... will introduce him to you."

... followed between these two personages a strange ..., during which the sound of a slow and regular ... was heard approaching. Shortly, a human form ap... in the shade of the corridor, and the young lieu... t, with whom we are already acquainted, stopped at ...reshold to receive the orders of the baron.

"Come in, my dear John," said Lord de Winter, — ... in, and shut the door."

...e young officer entered.

"Now," said the baron, "look at this woman. She is

young; she is beautiful; she possesses all earthly seductions. Well, she is a monster, who, at twenty-five years of age, has been guilty of as many crimes as you could read of in a year in the archives of our tribunals. Her voice prejudices her hearers in her favor; her beauty serves as a bait to her victims; her body even pays what she promises, — I must do her that justice. She will try to seduce you, perhaps she will try to kill you. I have extricated you from misery, Felton; I have caused you to be named lieutenant; I once saved your life, you know on what occasion. I am for you not only a protector, but a friend; not only a benefactor, but a father. This woman has come back again into England for the purpose of conspiring against my life. I hold this serpent in my hands. Well, I call you, and say to you: Friend Felton, John, my child, guard me, and more particularly guard yourself, against this woman. Swear, by your hopes of salvation, to keep her safely for the chastisement she has merited. John Felton, I trust your word! John Felton,

"And now, Madame, try to make your peace with God, for you are judged by men!"

Milady let her head sink, as if crushed by this sentence. Lord de Winter went out, making a sign to Felton, who followed him, shutting the door after him.

One instant after, the heavy step of a marine who served as sentinel was heard in the corridor, — his axe in his girdle and his musket on his shoulder.

Milady remained for some minutes in the same position, for she thought they might perhaps be examining her through the keyhole; she then slowly raised her head, which had resumed its formidable expression of menace and defiance, ran to the door to listen, looked out of her window, and returning to bury herself again in her large armchair, she reflected.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OFFICER.

MEANWHILE, the cardinal looked anxiously for news from England; but no news arrived that was not annoying and threatening.

Although Rochelle was invested, however certain success might appear, — thanks to the precautions taken, and above all to the dike, which prevented the entrance of any vessel into the besieged city, — the blockade might last a long time yet. This was a great affront to the king's army, and a great inconvenience to the cardinal, who had no longer, it is true, to embroil Louis XIII. with Anne of Austria, — for that affair was over, — but he had to adjust matters for M. de Bassompierre, who was

king was invited to come and see the hanging. He came languidly, placing himself in a good situation to see all the details. This amused him sometimes a little, and made him endure the siege with patience; but it did not prevent his getting very tired, or from talking at every moment of returning to Paris, — so that if the messengers and the spies had failed, his Eminence, notwithstanding all his inventiveness, would have found himself much embarrassed.

Nevertheless, time passed on, and the Rochellais did not surrender. The last spy that was taken was the bearer of a letter. This letter told Buckingham that the city was at an extremity; but instead of adding, "If your succor does not arrive within fifteen days, we will surrender," it added, quite simply, "If your succor comes not within fifteen days, we shall all be dead with hunger when it comes."

The Rochellais, then, had no hope but in Buckingham. Buckingham was their Messiah. It was evident that if they one day learned positively that they must not count on Buckingham, their courage would fail with their hope.

The cardinal looked, then, with great impatience for the news from England which would announce to him that Buckingham would not come.

The question of carrying the city by assault, though often debated in the council of the king, had been always rejected. In the first place, Rochelle appeared impregnable. Then the cardinal, whatever he said, very well knew that the horror of bloodshed in this encounter, in which Frenchman would combat against Frenchman, was a retrograde movement of sixty years impressed upon his policy; and the cardinal was at that period what we now call a man of progress. In fact, the sack of Rochelle, and the assassination of three or four thousand Huguenots who

allowed themselves to be killed, would resemble too closely, in 1628, the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572; and then, above all this, this extreme measure, which was not at all repugnant to the king, good Catholic as he was, always fell before this argument of the besieging generals, — Rochelle is impregnable except to famine.

The cardinal could not drive from his mind the fear he entertained of his terrible emissary, — for he comprehended the strange qualities of this woman, sometimes a serpent, sometimes a lion. Had she betrayed him? Was she dead? He knew her well enough in all cases to know that, whether acting for or against him, as a friend or an enemy, she would not remain motionless without great impediments; but whence did these impediments arise? That was what he could not know.

And yet he reckoned, and with reason, on Milady. He had divined, in the past of this woman, terrible things which his red mantle alone could cover; and he felt, from one cause or another, that this woman was his own, as she could look to no other but himself for a support superior

lais how unjust, selfish, and barbarous was the conduct of their leaders. These leaders had corn in abundance, and would not let them partake of it; they adopted as a maxim — for they too had maxims — that it was of very little consequence that women, children, and old men should die, so long as the men who were to defend the walls remained strong and healthy. Up to that time, whether from devotedness or from want of power to act against it, this maxim, without being generally adopted, nevertheless passed from theory into practice; but the notes did it injury. The notes reminded the men that the children, women, and old men whom they allowed to die were their sons, their wives, and their fathers, and that it would be more just for every one to be reduced to the common misery, in order that equal conditions should give birth to unanimous resolutions.

These notes had all the effect that he who wrote them could expect, in that they induced a great number of the inhabitants to open private negotiations with the royal army.

But at the moment when the cardinal saw his means already fructify, and applauded himself for having put it in action, an inhabitant of Rochelle who had contrived to pass the royal lines — God knows how, such was the watchfulness of Bassompierre, Schomberg, and the Duc d'Angoulême, themselves watched over by the cardinal — an inhabitant of Rochelle, we say, entered the city, coming from Portsmouth, and saying that he had seen a magnificent fleet ready to sail within eight days. Still further, Buckingham announced to the mayor that at length the great league was about to declare itself against France, and that the kingdom would be at once invaded by the English, Imperial, and Spanish armies. This letter was read publicly in all parts of the city. Copies were put up

at the corners of the streets; and even they who had begun to open negotiations interrupted them, being resolved to await the succor so pompously announced.

This unexpected circumstance brought back Richelieu's former anxiety, and forced him in spite of himself once more to turn his eyes to the other side of the sea.

During this time, exempt from the anxiety of its only and true chief, the royal army led a joyous life, neither provisions nor money being wanting in the camp. All the corps rivalled one another in audacity and gayety. To take spies and hang them, to make hazardous expeditions upon the dike or the sea, to imagine wild plans, and to execute them coolly, — such were the pastimes which made the army find these days short which were not only so long to the Rochellais, a prey to famine and anxiety, but even to the cardinal, who blockaded them so closely.

Sometimes when the cardinal, always on horseback, like the lowest *gendarme* of the army, cast a pensive glance over those works, so slowly keeping pace with his

perceived behind a hedge, reclining on the sand, and catching in its passage one of those rays of the sun so rare at this period of the year, seven men surrounded by empty bottles. Four of these men were our musketeers, preparing to listen to a letter one of them had just received. This letter was so important that it made them forsake their cards and their dice on the drum-head.

The other three were occupied in opening an enormous flagon of Collioure wine; these were the lackeys of these gentlemen.

The cardinal was, as we have said, in very low spirits; and nothing when he was in that state of mind increased his depression so much as gayety in others. Besides, he had another strange fancy, which was always to believe that the causes of his sadness created the gayety of others. Making a sign to La Houdinière and Cahusac to stop, he alighted from his horse, and went towards these suspected merry companions, hoping, by means of the sand which deadened the sound of his steps, and of the hedge which concealed his approach, to catch some words of this conversation which appeared so interesting. At ten paces from the hedge he recognized the talkative Gascon; and as he had already perceived that these men were musketeers, he did not doubt that the three others were those called the Inseparables; that is to say, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

It may be supposed that his desire to hear the conversation was augmented by this discovery. His eyes took a strange expression, and with the step of a tiger-cat he advanced towards the hedge; but he had not been able to catch more than a few vague syllables without any positive sense, when a sonorous and short cry made him start, and attracted the attention of the musketeers.

"Officer!" cried Grimaud.

"You are speaking, you scoundrel!" said Athos, rising upon his elbow, and transfixing Grimaud with his flaming look.

Grimaud therefore added nothing to his speech, but contented himself with pointing his index finger in the direction of the hedge, announcing by this gesture the cardinal and his escort.

With a single bound the musketeers were on their feet, and saluted with respect.

The cardinal seemed furious.

"It appears that Messieurs the Musketeers keep guard," said he. "Are the English expected by land, or do the musketeers consider themselves superior officers?"

"Monseigneur," replied Athos, for amid the general fright he alone had preserved the noble calmness and coolness that never forsook him, — "Monseigneur, the musketeers, when they are not on duty, or when their duty is over, drink and play at dice, and they are certainly superior officers to their lackeys."

"Lackeys!" grumbled the cardinal. "Lackeys who

D'Artagnan came forward and stammered out a few words of gratitude which soon expired under the gloomy looks of the cardinal.

"It does not signify, gentlemen," continued the cardinal, without appearing to be in the least swerved from his first intention by the diversion which Athos had started,—"it does not signify, gentlemen. I do not like to have simple soldiers, because they have the advantage of serving in a privileged corps, thus to play the great lords; discipline is the same for them as for everybody else."

Athos allowed the cardinal to finish his sentence completely, and bowed in sign of assent. Then he resumed in his turn: "Discipline, Monseigneur, has, I hope, in no way been forgotten by us. We are not on duty, and we believed that not being on duty we were at liberty to dispose of our time as we pleased. If we are so fortunate as to have some particular duty to perform for your Eminence, we are ready to obey you. Your Eminence may perceive," continued Athos, knitting his brow, for this sort of investigation began to annoy him, "that we have not come out without our arms."

And he showed the cardinal, with his finger, the four muskets piled near the drum, on which were the cards and dice.

"Your Eminence may believe," added D'Artagnan, "that we would have come to meet you, if we could have supposed it was Monseigneur coming towards us with so few attendants."

The cardinal bit his mustache, and even his lips a little.

"Do you know what you look like, all together, as you are, armed and guarded by your lackeys?" said the cardinal. "You look like four conspirators."

"Oh, as to that, Monseigneur, it is true," said Athos; "we do conspire, as your Eminence might have seen

the other morning. Only we conspire against the Rochellais."

"Ah, you gentlemen of policy!" replied the cardinal, knitting his brow in his turn, "the secret of many unknown things might perhaps be found in your brains, if we could read them as you read that letter which you concealed as soon as you saw me coming."

The color mounted to the face of Athos, and he made a step towards his Eminence.

"One might think you really suspected us, Monseigneur, and we were undergoing a real interrogatory. If it be so, we trust your Eminence will deign to explain yourself, and we should then at least be acquainted with our real position."

"And if it were an interrogatory!" replied the cardinal. "Others besides you have undergone such, M. Athos, and have replied thereto."

"Thus I have told your Eminence that you had but to question us, and we are ready to reply."

"What was that letter you were about to read, M. Ara-

three friends had fixed their eyes, like men ill-disposed to allow themselves to be taken. The cardinalists were three; the musketeers, lackeys included, were seven. He judged that the match would be so much the less equal, if Athos and his companions were really plotting; and by one of those rapid turns which he always had at command, all his anger faded away into a smile.

"Well, well!" said he, "you are brave young men, proud in daylight, faithful in darkness. We can find no fault with you for watching over yourselves, when you watch so carefully over others. Gentlemen, I have not forgotten the night in which you served me as an escort to the Red Dovecot. If there were any danger to be apprehended on the road I am going, I would request you to accompany me; but as there is none, remain where you are, finish your bottles, your game, and your letter. Adieu, gentlemen!"

And remounting his horse, which Cahusac led to him, he saluted them with his hand, and rode away.

The four young men, standing and motionless, followed him with their eyes without speaking a single word until he had disappeared. Then they looked at one another.

The countenances of all gave evidence of terror, for notwithstanding the friendly adieu of his Eminence, they plainly perceived that the cardinal went away with rage in his heart.

Athos alone smiled, with a self-possessed, disdainful smile.

When the cardinal was out of hearing and sight, "That Grimaud kept bad watch!" cried Porthos, who had a great inclination to vent his ill-humor on somebody.

Grimaud was about to reply to excuse himself. Athos lifted his finger, and Grimaud was silent.

"Would you have given up the letter, Aramis?" said D'Artagnan.

"I," said Aramis, in his most flutelike tone, — "I had made up my mind. If he had insisted upon the letter being given up to him, I would have presented the letter to him with one hand, and with the other I would have run my sword through his body."

"I expected as much," said Athos; "and that was why I threw myself between you and him. Indeed, this man is very much to blame for talking thus to other men; one would say he had never had to do with any but women and children."

"My dear Athos, I admire you, but nevertheless, we were in the wrong, after all."

"How, in the wrong?" said Athos. "Whose, then, is the air we breathe? Whose is the ocean upon which we look? Whose is the sand upon which we were reclining? Whose is that letter of your mistress? Do these belong to the cardinal? Upon my honor, this man fancies the world

surrounded him, and the three lackeys grouped themselves again near the wine-jar.

"You had only read a line or two," said D'Artagnan; "read the letter again from the commencement."

"Willingly," said Aramis.

My dear Cousin, — I think I shall make up my mind to set out for Béthune, where my sister has placed our little servant in the convent of the Carmelites; this poor child is quite resigned, as she knows she cannot live elsewhere without the salvation of her soul being in danger. Nevertheless, if the affairs of our family are arranged, as we hope they will be, I believe she will run the risk of being damned, and will return to those she regrets, particularly as she knows they are always thinking of her. Meanwhile, she is not very wretched; what she most desires is a letter from her intended. I know that such viands pass with difficulty through convent gratings; but after all, as I have given you proofs, my dear cousin, I am not unskilled in such affairs, and I will take charge of the commission. My sister thanks you for your good and eternal remembrance. She has experienced much anxiety; but she is now at length a little re-assured, having sent her secretary away in order that nothing may happen unexpectedly.

Adieu, my dear cousin. Tell us news of yourself as often as you can; that is to say, as often as you can with safety. I embrace you.

Marie Michon.

"Oh, what do I not owe you, Aramis?" said D'Artagnan. "Dear Constance! I have at length, then, intelligence of you. She lives; she is in safety in a convent; she is at Béthune! Where is Béthune, Athos?"

"Why, upon the frontiers of Artois and of Flanders. The siege once over, we shall be able to make a tour in that direction."

"And that will not be long, it is to be hoped," said Porthos; "for they have this morning hung a spy who

confessed that the Rochellais were reduced to the leather of their shoes. Supposing that after having eaten the leather they eat the soles, I cannot see much that is left unless they eat one another."

"Poor fools!" said Athos, emptying a glass of excellent Bordeaux wine which, without having at that period the reputation it now enjoys, merited it no less, — "poor fools! As if the Catholic religion was not the most advantageous and the most agreeable of all religions! All the same," resumed he, after having clicked his tongue against his palate, "they are brave fellows! But what the devil are you about, Aramis?" continued Athos. "Why, you are squeezing that letter into your pocket!"

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "Athos is right, it must be burned. And yet if we burn it, who knows whether Monsieur Cardinal has not a secret to interrogate ashes?"

"He must have one," said Athos.

"What will you do with the letter, then?" asked Porthos.

"And now," said Athos, "unless Monsieur Cardinal should form the ingenious idea of ripping up Grimaud, I think we may be pretty much at our ease respecting the letter."

Meantime, his Eminence continued his melancholy ride, murmuring between his mustaches, "These four men must positively be mine."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE FIRST DAY OF CAPTIVITY.

Let us return to Milady, whom a glance thrown upon the coast of France has made us lose sight of for an instant.

We shall find her still in the despairing attitude in which we left her, plunged in an abyss of dismal reflections, — a dark hell at the gate of which she has almost left hope behind, because for the first time she doubts, for the first time she fears.

On two occasions her fortune has failed her, on two occasions she has found herself discovered and betrayed; and on these two occasions it was to one fatal genius, sent doubtlessly by the Lord to combat her, that she has

one shall know without dying. In short, at the moment in which she has just obtained from Richelieu a *carte blanche* by the means of which she is about to take vengeance on her enemy, this precious paper is torn from her hands, and it is D'Artagnan who holds her prisoner and is about to send her to some filthy Botany Bay, some infamous Tyburn of the Indian Ocean.

All this she owes to D'Artagnan, without doubt. From whom can come so many disgraces heaped upon her head, if not from him? He alone could have transmitted to Lord de Winter all these frightful secrets which he has discovered, one after another, by a train of fatalities. He knows her brother-in-law. He must have written to him.

What hatred she distils! Motionless, with her burning and fixed glances, in her solitary apartment, how well the outbursts of passion which at times escape from the depths of her chest with her respiration, accompany the sound of the surge which rises, growls, roars, and breaks itself like an eternal and powerless despair against the rocks on which is built this dark and lofty castle! How many magnificent projects of vengeance she conceives by the light of the flashes which her tempestuous passion casts over her mind against Madame Bonacieux, against Buckingham, but above all against D'Artagnan, — projects lost in the distance of the future.

Yes; but in order to avenge herself she must be free. And to be free, a prisoner has to pierce a wall, detach bars, cut through a floor, — all undertakings which a patient and strong man may accomplish, but before which the feverish irritations of a woman must give way. Besides, to do all this, time is necessary, — months, years; and she has ten or twelve days, as Lord de Winter, her fraternal and terrible jailer, has told her.

And yet, if she were a man she would attempt all this,

and perhaps might succeed; why, then, did Heaven make the mistake of placing that manlike soul in that frail and delicate body?

The first moments of her captivity were terrible; a few convulsions of rage which she could not suppress paid her debt of feminine weakness to nature. But by degrees she overcame the outbursts of her mad passion; the nervous tremblings which agitated her frame disappeared, and she remained folded within herself like a fatigued serpent in repose.

"Go to, go to! I must have been mad to allow myself to be carried away so," says she, gazing into the glass, which reflects back to her eyes the burning glance by which she appears to interrogate herself. "No violence; violence is the proof of weakness. In the first place, I have never succeeded by that means. Perhaps if I employed my strength against women I might perchance find them weaker than myself, and consequently conquer them; but it is with men that I struggle, and I am but a woman to them. Let me fight like a woman, then; my strength

still further, her complexion. A better idea, however, came into her mind before going to bed. She had heard something said about supper. She had already been an hour in this apartment; they could not long delay bringing her a repast. The prisoner did not wish to lose time; and she resolved to make that very evening some attempts to ascertain the nature of the ground she had to work upon, by studying the characters of the men to whose guardianship she was committed.

A light appeared under the door; this light announced the re-appearance of her jailers. Milady, who had arisen, threw herself quickly into the armchair, her head thrown back, her beautiful hair unbound and dishevelled, her bosom half bare beneath her crumpled lace, one hand on her heart, and the other hanging down.

The bolts were drawn; the door groaned upon its hinges. Steps sounded in the chamber, and drew near.

"Place that table there," said a voice which the prisoner recognized as that of Felton.

The order was executed.

"You will bring lights, and relieve the sentinel," continued Felton.

And this double order which the young lieutenant gave to the same individuals proved to Milady that her servants were the same men as her guards; that is to say, soldiers.

Felton's orders were, for the rest, executed with a silent rapidity that gave a good idea of the way in which he maintained discipline.

At length Felton, who had not yet looked at Milady, turned towards her.

"Ah, ah!" said he, "she is asleep; that's well. When she wakes she can sup." And he made some steps towards the door.

"But, my lieutenant," said a soldier, less stoical than his chief, and who had approached Milady, "this woman is not asleep."

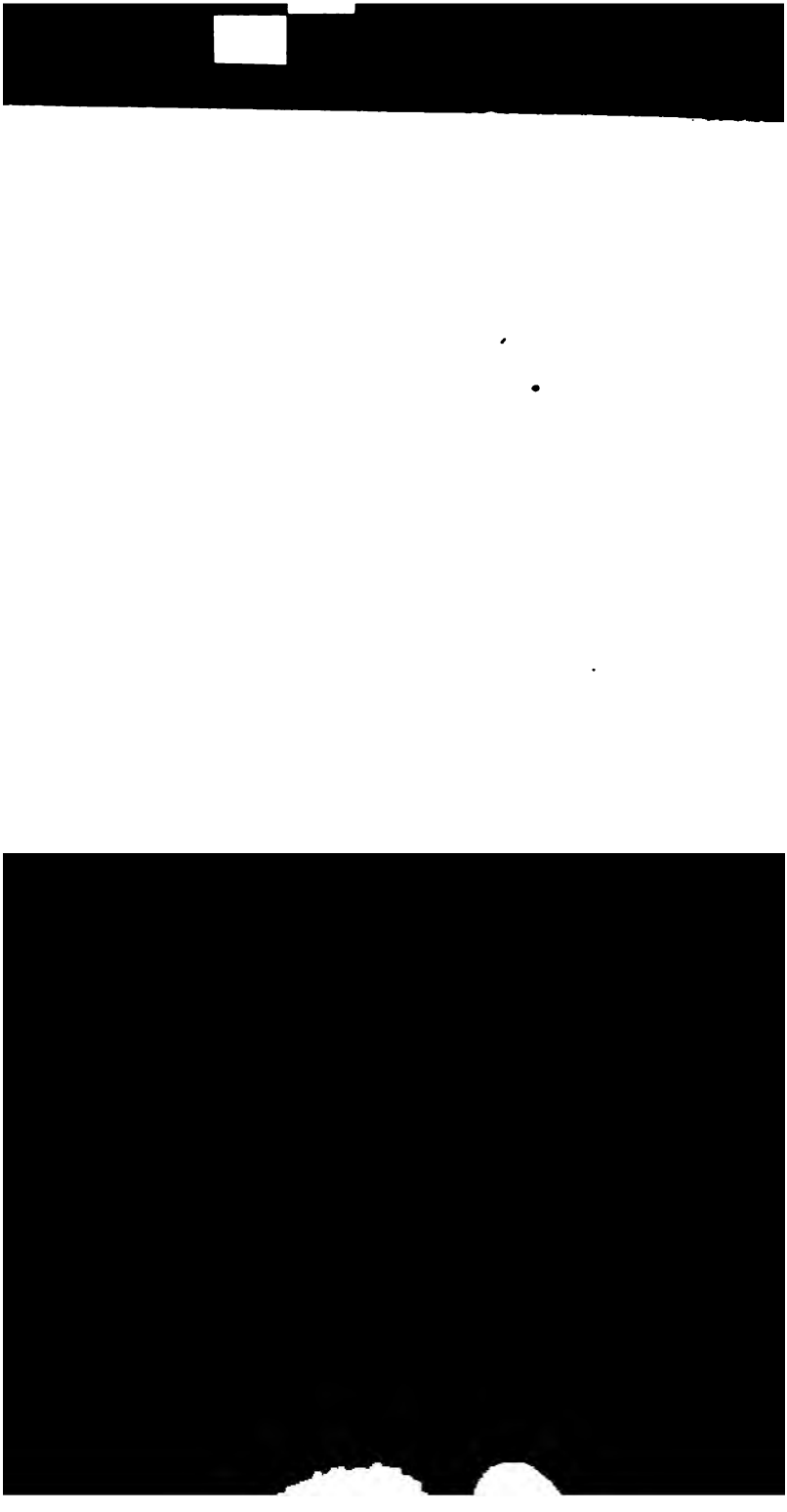
"What, not asleep!" said Felton; "what is she doing, then?"

"She has fainted. Her face is very pale, and I have listened in vain; I do not hear her breathe."

"You are right," said Felton, after having looked at Milady from the spot on which he stood without moving a step towards her. "Go and tell Lord de Winter that his prisoner has fainted, — for this event not having been foreseen, I don't know what to do."

The soldier went out to obey the orders of his officer. Felton sat down upon an armchair which happened to be near the door, and waited without speaking a word, without making a gesture. Milady possessed that great art, so much studied by women, of looking through her long eyelashes without appearing to open the lids. She perceived Felton, who sat with his back towards her. She contin-

*Milady and Felton.*



And she assumed, upon sitting up in the armchair, a still more graceful and abandoned position than when she reclined.

Felton arose.

"You will be served, thus, Madame, three times a day," said he. "In the morning at nine o'clock, in the day at one o'clock, and in the evening at eight. If that does not suit you, you can point out what other hours you prefer, and in this respect your wishes will be complied with."

"But am I to remain always alone in this vast and dismal chamber?" asked Milady.

"A woman of the neighborhood has been sent for, who will be to-morrow at the castle, and will return as often as you desire her presence."

"I thank you, sir," replied the prisoner, humbly.

Felton made a slight bow, and directed his steps towards the door. At the moment he was about to go out, Lord de Winter appeared in the corridor, followed by the soldier who had been sent to inform him of the swoon of Milady. He held a vial of salts in his hand.

"Well, what is it, — what is going on here?" said he, in a jeering voice, on seeing the prisoner sitting up, and Felton about to go out. "Is this corpse come to life already? Felton, my lad, did you not perceive that you were taken for a novice, and that the first act was being performed of a comedy of which we shall doubtless have the pleasure of following out all the developments?"

"I thought so, my Lord," said Felton; "but as the prisoner is a woman, after all, I wish to pay her the attention that every man of gentle birth owes to a woman, if not on her account, at least on my own."

Milady shuddered through her whole system. These words of Felton's passed like ice through her veins.

"So," replied De Winter, laughing, "that beautiful

hair so skilfully dishevelled, that white skin, and that languishing look, have not yet seduced you, you heart of stone?"

"No, my Lord," replied the impassible young man; "your Lordship may be assured that it requires more than the tricks and coquetry of a woman to corrupt me."

"In that case, my brave lieutenant, let us leave Milady to find out something else, and go to supper; but be easy! She has a fruitful imagination, and the second act of the comedy will not delay its steps after the first."

And at these words Lord de Winter passed his arm through that of Felton, and led him out, laughing.

"Oh, I will be a match for you!" murmured Milady, between her teeth; "be assured of that, you poor spoiled monk, you poor converted soldier, who has cut his uniform out of a monk's frock!"

"By the way," resumed De Winter, stopping at the threshold of the door, "you must not, Milady, let this check take away your appetite. Taste that fowl and

you see, my brave Felton; don't you see what I told you! That knife was for you, my lad; she would have killed you. Observe, this is one of her peculiarities, to get rid thus, after one fashion or another, of all the people who bother her. If I had listened to you, the knife would have been pointed and of steel. Then no more of Felton; she would have cut your throat, and after that everybody else's. See, John, see how well she knows how to handle a knife."

In fact, Milady still held the harmless weapon in her clenched hand; but these last words, this supreme insult, relaxed her hands, her strength, and even her will. The knife fell to the ground.

"You were right, my Lord," said Felton, with a tone of profound disgust which sounded to the very bottom of the heart of Milady, — "you were right, my Lord, and I was wrong."

And both again left the room.

But this time Milady lent a more attentive ear than the first, and she heard their steps die away in the distance of the corridor.

"I am lost," murmured she; "I am lost! I am in the power of men upon whom I can have no more influence than upon statues of bronze or granite; they know me by heart, and are steeled against all my weapons. It is, however, impossible that this should end as they have decreed!"

In fact, as this last reflection indicated, — this instinctive return to hope, — sentiments of weakness or fear did not dwell long in her ardent spirit. Milady sat down to table, ate from several dishes, drank a little Spanish wine, and felt all her resolution return.

Before she went to bed she had pondered, analyzed, turned on all sides, examined on all points, the words,

the steps, the gestures, the signs, and even the silence of her interlocutors; and of this profound, skilful, and anxious study the result was that Felton, everything considered, appeared the more vulnerable of her two persecutors.

One expression above all recurred to the mind of the prisoner: "If I had listened to you," Lord de Winter had said to Felton.

Felton then had spoken in her favor, since Lord de Winter had not been willing to listen to him.

"Weak or strong," repeated Milady, "that man has, then, a spark of pity in his soul; of that spark I will make a flame that shall devour him. As to the other, he knows me, he fears me, and knows what he has to expect of me if ever I escape from his hands. It is useless, then, to attempt anything with him. But Felton — that 's another thing. He is a young, ingenuous, pure man who seems virtuous; him there are means of destroying."

And Milady went to bed and fell asleep with a smile

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE SECOND DAY OF CAPTIVITY.

MILADY dreamed that she at length had D'Artagnan in her power, that she was present at his execution; and it was the sight of his odious blood, flowing beneath the axe of the headsman, which spread that charming smile upon her lips.

She slept as a prisoner sleeps, rocked by his first hope.

In the morning, when they entered her chamber she was still in bed. Felton remained in the corridor. He brought with him the woman of whom he had spoken the evening before, and who had just arrived; this woman entered, and approaching Milady's bed, offered her services.

Milady was habitually pale; her complexion might therefore deceive a person who saw her for the first time.

"I am in a fever," said she; "I have not slept a single instant during all this long night. I suffer horribly. Are you likely to be more humane to me than others were yesterday? All I ask is permission to remain abed."

"Would you like to have a physician called?" said the woman.

Felton listened to this dialogue without speaking a word.

Milady reflected that the more people she had around her the more she would have to work upon, and Lord de Winter would redouble his watch. Besides, the physician might declare the ailment feigned; and Milady, after

having lost the first trick, was not willing to lose the second.

"Go and fetch a physician!" said she. "What could be the good of that? These gentlemen declared yesterday that my illness was a comedy; it would be just the same to-day, no doubt, — for since yesterday evening they have had plenty of time to send for a doctor."

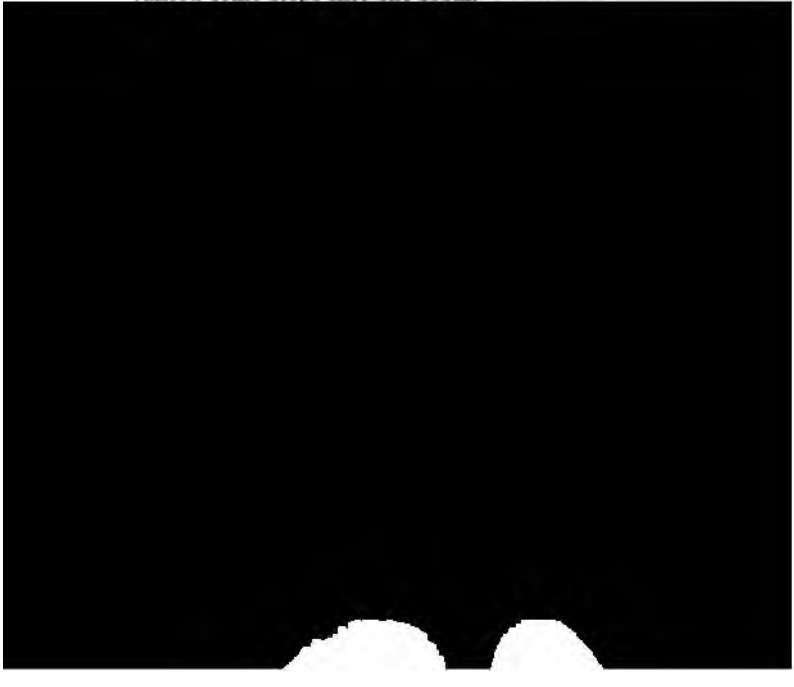
"Then," said Felton, who became impatient, "say yourself, Madame, what treatment you wish followed."

"Eh, how can I tell? My God! I know that I suffer, that's all. Give me anything you like, it is of little consequence."

"Go and fetch Lord de Winter," said Felton, tired of these eternal complaints.

"Oh, no, no!" cried Milady; "no, sir, do not call him, I conjure you. I am well, I want nothing; do not call him."

She gave so much vehemence, such magnetic eloquence to this exclamation, that Felton in spite of himself advanced some steps into the room.



conceal from anybody who might be watching her this burst of inward satisfaction.

Two hours passed away.

"Now it is time that the malady should be over," said she; "let me rise, and obtain some success this very day. I have but ten days, and this evening two of them will be gone."

In the morning, when they entered Milady's chamber they had brought her breakfast. Now she thought they could not long delay coming to clear the table, and that Felton would then re-appear.

Milady was not deceived. Felton re-appeared, and without observing whether Milady had or had not touched her repast, made a sign that the table should be carried out of the room, it having been brought in ready spread.

Felton remained behind; he held a book in his hand.

Milady, reclining in an armchair near the chimney, beautiful, pale, and resigned, looked like a holy virgin awaiting martyrdom.

Felton approached her, and said, "Lord de Winter, who is a Catholic, like yourself, Madame, thinking that the deprivation of the rites and ceremonies of your church might be painful to you, has consented that you should read every day the ordinary of your Mass; and here is a book which contains the ritual."

At the manner in which Felton laid the book upon the little table near which Milady was sitting, at the tone in which he pronounced the two words, *your Mass*, at the disdainful smile with which he accompanied them, Milady raised her head, and looked more attentively at the officer.

By that plain arrangement of the hair, by that costume of extreme simplicity, by the brow polished like marble and as hard and impenetrable, she recognized one of those

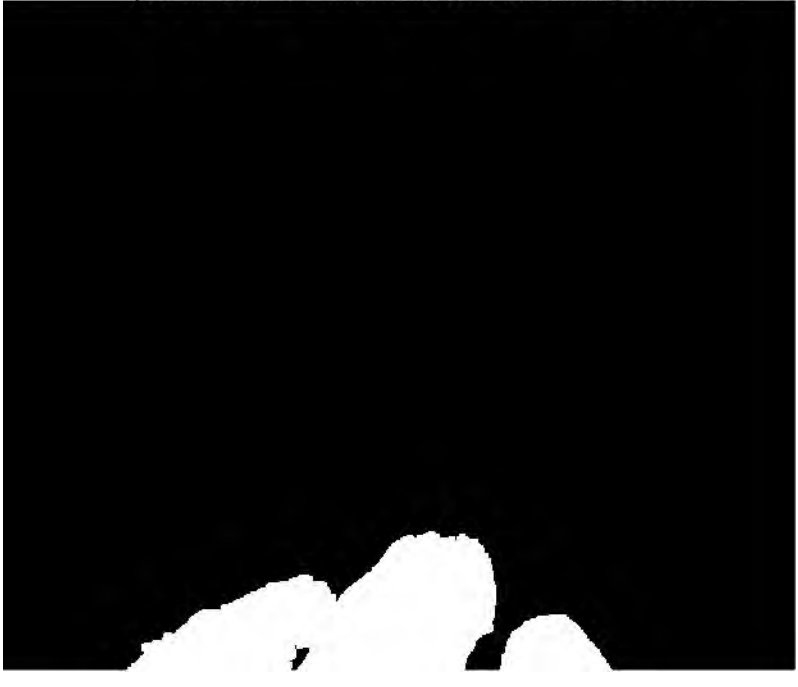
gloomy Puritans she had so often met, not only in the court of King James, but in that of the King of France, where, in spite of the remembrance of the St. Bartholomew, they sometimes came to seek refuge.

She then had one of those sudden inspirations which only people of genius receive in great crises, in supreme moments which are to decide their fortunes or their lives.

Those two words, *your Mass*, and a simple glance cast upon Felton, revealed to her all the importance of the reply she was about to make; but with that rapidity of intelligence which was peculiar to her, this reply, ready arranged, presented itself to her lips: —

"I?" said she, with an accent of disdain in unison with that which she had remarked in the voice of the young officer, — "I, sir? *My Mass?* Lord de Winter, the corrupted Catholic, knows very well that I am not of his religion, and this is a snare he wishes to lay for me!"

"And of what religion are you, then, Madame?" asked Felton, with an astonishment which in spite of the empire he held over himself he could not entirely conceal.



ing it, as if she must be contaminated by it, "you may carry it back and make use of it yourself, for doubtless you are doubly the accomplice of Lord de Winter, — the accomplice in his persecutions, the accomplice in his heresies."

Felton made no reply, took the book with the same appearance of repugnance which he had before manifested, and retired pensively.

Lord de Winter came towards five o'clock in the evening. Milady had had time, during the whole day, to trace her plan of conduct. She received him like a woman who had already recovered all her advantages.

"It appears," said the baron, seating himself in the armchair opposite that occupied by Milady, and stretching out his legs carelessly upon the hearth, — "it appears we have made a little apostasy!"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean to say that since we last met you have changed your religion. You have not, by chance, married a Protestant for a third husband, have you?"

"Explain yourself, my Lord," replied the prisoner, with majesty; "for though I hear your words, I declare I do not understand them."

"Then you have no religion at all; I like that best," replied Lord de Winter, laughing.

"Certainly that is most accordant with your own principles," replied Milady, frigidly.

"Oh, I confess it is all the same to me."

"Oh, you need not avow this religious indifference, my Lord; your debaucheries and crimes would vouch for it."

"What, you talk of debaucheries, Madame Messalina, Lady Macbeth! Either I misunderstand you, or you are very shameless!"

"You only speak thus because you are overheard, coolly replied Milady; "and you wish to interest your jailers and your hangmen against me."

"My jailers and my hangmen! Heyday, Madame! you are taking a poetical tone, and the comedy of yesterday turns to a tragedy this evening. As to the rest, in eight days you will be where you ought to be, and my task will be completed."

"Infamous task! impious task!" cried Milady, with the exultation of a victim who provokes his judge.

"My word," said De Winter, rising, "I think the hussy is going mad! Come, come, calm yourself, Madame Puritan, or I 'll remove you to a dungeon. It 's my Spanish wine that has got into your head, is it not? But never mind; that sort of intoxication is not dangerous, and will have no bad effects."

And Lord de Winter retired swearing, which at that period was a very knightly habit.

Felton was indeed behind the door, and had not lost one word of this scene. Milady had guessed aright.

soldier who was on duty at her door did not march with the same step, and seemed to listen. For the moment she wished nothing better. She arose, came to the table, ate but little, and drank only water.

An hour after, her table was cleared; but Milady remarked that this time Felton did not accompany the soldiers. He feared, then, to see her too often.

She turned towards the wall to smile, — for there was in this smile such an expression of triumph that this smile alone would have betrayed her.

She allowed, therefore, half-an-hour to pass away; and as at that moment all was silence in the old castle, as nothing was heard but the eternal murmur of the waves, — that immense breaking of the ocean, — with her pure, harmonious, and powerful voice, she began the first couplet of the psalm then in great favor with the Puritans:

"Thou leavest thy servants, Lord,
To see if they be strong;
But soon thou dost afford
Thy hand to lead them on."

These verses were not excellent, — very far from it; but as it is well known, the Puritans did not pique themselves upon their poetry.

While singing, Milady listened. The soldier on guard at her door stopped, as if he had been changed into stone. Milady was then able to judge of the effect she had produced.

Then she continued her singing with inexpressible fervor and feeling. It appeared to her that the sounds spread to a distance beneath the vaulted roofs, and carried with them a magic charm to soften the hearts of her jailers. It however likewise appeared that the soldier on duty — a zealous Catholic no doubt — shook off the charm,

for through the door he called: "Hold your tongue, Madame! Your song is as dismal as a 'De profundis;' and if besides the pleasure of being in garrison here, we must hear such things as these, no mortal can hold out."

"Silence!" then exclaimed another stern voice which Milady recognized as that of Felton. "What are you meddling with, stupid? Did anybody order you to prevent that woman from singing? No. You were told to guard her, — to fire at her if she attempted to fly. Guard her! If she flies, kill her; but don't exceed your orders."

An expression of unspeakable joy lightened the countenance of Milady; but this expression was fleeting as the reflection of lightning. Without appearing to have heard the dialogue, of which she had not lost a word, she began again, giving to her voice all the charm, all the power, all the seduction the demon had bestowed upon it: —

"For all my tears, my cares,
My exile, and my chains,

This verse, into which the terrible enchantress threw her whole soul, completed the trouble which had seized the heart of the young officer. He opened the door quickly; and Milady saw him appear, pale as usual, but with his eyes inflamed and almost wild.

"Why do you sing thus, and with such a voice?" said he.

"Your pardon, sir," said Milady, with mildness. "I forgot that my songs are out of place in this castle. I have perhaps offended you in your creed; but it was without wishing to do so, I swear. Pardon me, then, a fault which is perhaps great, but which certainly was involuntary."

Milady was so beautiful at this moment, the religious ecstasy in which she appeared to be plunged gave such an expression to her countenance, that Felton was so dazzled that he fancied he beheld the angel whom he had only just before heard.

"Yes, yes," said he; "you disturb, you agitate the people who live in the castle."

The poor senseless young man was not aware of the incoherence of his words, while Milady was reading with her lynx's eyes the very depths of his heart.

"I will be silent, then," said Milady, casting down her eyes with all the sweetness she could give to her voice, with all the resignation she could impress upon her manner.

"No, no, Madame," said Felton, "only do not sing so loud, particularly at night."

And at these words Felton, feeling that he could not long maintain his severity towards his prisoner, rushed out of the room.

"You have done right, Lieutenant," said the soldier. "Such songs disturb the mind; and yet we become accustomed to them, her voice is so beautiful."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE THIRD DAY OF CAPTIVITY.

Felton had fallen; but there was still another step to be taken. He must be retained, or rather he must be left quite alone; and Milady but obscurely perceived the means which could lead to this result.

Still more must be done. He must be made to speak, in order that he might be spoken to, — for Milady very well knew that her greatest seduction was in her voice, which so skilfully ran over the whole gamut of tones from human speech to language celestial.

Yet in spite of all this seduction Milady might fail, — for

In the morning, Felton came as usual; but Milady allowed him to preside over all the preparations for breakfast without addressing a word to him. At the moment when he was about to retire, she was cheered with a ray of hope, for she thought he was about to speak; but his lips moved without any sound leaving his mouth, and making a powerful effort to control himself, he sent back to his heart the words that were about to escape from his lips, and went out.

Towards mid-day, Lord de Winter entered.

It was a tolerably fine winter's day, and a ray of that pale English sun which lightens but does not warm came through the bars of her prison.

Milady was looking out at the window, and pretended not to hear the door as it opened.

"Ah, ah!" said Lord de Winter, "after having played comedy, after having played tragedy, we are now playing melancholy?"

The prisoner made no reply.

"Yes, yes," continued Lord de Winter, "I understand. You would like very well to be at liberty on that beach! You would like very well to be in a good ship dancing upon the waves of that emerald-green sea; you would like very well, either on land or on the ocean, to lay for me one of those nice little ambuscades you are so skilful in planning. Patience, patience! In four days' time the shore will be beneath your foot, the sea will be open to you, — more open than will perhaps be agreeable to you, for in four days England will be relieved of you."

Milady folded her hands, and raising her fine eyes towards heaven, "Lord, Lord," said she, with an angelic meekness of gesture and tone, "pardon this man, as I myself pardon him."

"Yes, pray, accursed woman!" cried the baron; "your

prayer is so much the more generous from your being, I swear to you, in the power of a man who will never pardon you!" And he went out.

At the moment he went out a piercing glance darted through the opening of the nearly closed door, and she perceived Felton, who drew quickly to one side to prevent being seen by her.

Then she threw herself upon her knees, and began to pray.

"My God, my God!" said she, "thou knowest in what holy cause I suffer; give me, then, strength to suffer."

The door opened gently; the beautiful supplicant pretended not to hear the noise, and in a voice broken by tears, she continued:—

"God of vengeance! God of goodness! wilt thou allow the frightful projects of this man to be accomplished?"

Then only she pretended to hear the sound of Felton's steps, and rising quick as thought, she blushed, as if ashamed of being surprised on her knees.

Oh, my God, thou knowest whether I am guilty! Say I am condemned, sir, if you please; but you know that God, who loves martyrs, sometimes permits the innocent to be condemned."

"Were you condemned, were you innocent, were you a martyr," replied Felton, "the greater would be the necessity for prayer; and I myself would aid you with my prayers."

"Oh, you are a just man!" cried Milady, throwing herself at his feet. "I can hold out no longer, for I fear I shall be wanting in strength at the moment when I shall be forced to undergo the struggle, and confess my faith. Listen, then, to the supplication of a despairing woman. You are abused, sir; but that is not the question. I only ask you one favor; and if you grant it me, I will bless you in this world and in the next."

"Speak to the master, Madame," said Felton; "happily, I am neither charged with the power of pardoning nor punishing. It is upon one higher placed than I am that God has laid this responsibility."

"To you — no, to you alone! Listen to me, rather than add to my destruction, rather than add to my ignominy!"

"If you have merited this shame, Madame, if you have incurred this ignominy, you must submit to it as an offering to God."

"What do you say? Oh, you do not understand me! When I speak of ignominy, you think I speak of some chastisement, of imprisonment or death. Would to Heaven! Of what consequence to me is imprisonment or death?"

"It is I who no longer understand you, Madame," said Felton.

"Or, rather, who pretend not to understand me, sir!" replied the prisoner, with a smile of incredulity.

"No, Madame, on the honor of a soldier, on the faith of a Christian."

"What, you are ignorant of Lord de Winter's designs upon me?"

"I am."

"Impossible; you are his confidant!"

"I never lie, Madame."

"Oh, he conceals them too little for you not to divine them."

"I seek to divine nothing, Madame; I wait till I am confided in, and apart from that which Lord de Winter has said to me before you, he has confided nothing to me."

"Why, then," cried Milady, with an incredible tone of truthfulness, "you are not his accomplice; you do not know that he destines me to a disgrace which all the punishments of the world cannot equal in horror?"

"You are deceived, Madame," said Felton, blushing; "Lord de Winter is not capable of such a crime."

"Good," said Milady to herself; "without knowing

feeling of execration which all the English had declared towards him whom the Catholics themselves called the extortioner, the pillager, the debauchee, and whom the Puritans styled simply Satan.

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried Milady; "when I supplicate thee to pour upon this man the chastisement which is his due, thou knowest it is not my own vengeance I pursue, but the deliverance of a whole nation that I implore!"

"Do you know him, then?" asked Felton.

"At length he interrogates me!" said Milady to herself, at the height of joy at having obtained so quickly such a great result. "Oh, know him? Yes, yes! to my misfortune, to my eternal misfortune!" and Milady twisted her arms as if in a paroxysm of grief.

Felton no doubt felt within himself that his strength was abandoning him, and he made several steps towards the door; but the prisoner, whose eye never left him, sprang in pursuit of him and stopped him.

"Sir," cried she, "be kind, be clement, listen to my prayer! That knife, which the fatal prudence of the baron deprived me of, because he knows the use I would make of it! Oh, hear me to the end! that knife, give it to me for a minute only, for mercy's, for pity's sake! I will embrace your knees! You shall shut the door that you may be certain I contemplate no injury to you! My God! to you, — the only just, good, and compassionate being I have met with! To you, — my preserver, perhaps! One minute that knife, one minute, a single minute, and I will restore it to you through the grating of the door. Only one minute, Mr. Felton, and you will have saved my honor!"

"To kill yourself?" cried Felton, with terror, forgetting to withdraw his hands from the hands of the prisoner, — "to kill yourself?"

"I have told, sir," murmured Milady, lowering her voice, and allowing herself to sink overpowered to the ground; "I have told my secret! He knows all! My God, I am lost!"

Felton remained standing, motionless and undecided.

"He still doubts," thought Milady; "I have not been earnest enough."

Some one was heard in the corridor; Milady recognised the step of Lord de Winter.

Felton recognized it also, and made a step towards the door.

Milady sprang towards him. "Oh, not a word," said she, in a concentrated voice, "not a word of all that I have said to you to this man, or I am lost, and it would be you — you —"

Then as the steps drew near, she became silent for fear of being heard, applying, with a gesture of infinite terror, her beautiful hand to Felton's mouth.

Felton gently repulsed Milady, and she sank into a chair.

with a knife in my hand, and he will discover that all this despair is but acted."

She placed herself before the glass, and regarded herself attentively; never had she appeared more beautiful.

"Oh, yes," said she, smiling, "but he won't tell him!"

In the evening Lord de Winter accompanied the supper.

"Sir," said Milady, "is your presence an indispensable accessory of my captivity? Could you not spare me the increase of torture which your visits cause me?"

"How, dear sister!" said Lord de Winter. "Did not you sentimentally inform me with that pretty mouth of yours, so cruel to me to-day, that you came to England solely for the pleasure of seeing me at your ease, an enjoyment of which you told me you so sensibly felt the deprivation that you had risked everything for it, — seasickness, tempest, captivity? Well, here I am; be satisfied. Besides, this time, my visit has a motive."

Milady trembled; she thought Felton had told all. Perhaps never in her life had this woman, who had experienced so many opposite and powerful emotions, felt her heart beat so violently.

She was seated. Lord de Winter took a chair, drew it towards her, and sat down close beside her. Then taking a paper out of his pocket, he unfolded it slowly.

"Here," said he, "I want to show you the kind of passport which I have drawn up, and which will serve you henceforward as the rule of order in the life I consent to leave you."

Then turning his eyes from Milady to the paper, he read: "'Order to conduct ——' The name is blank," interrupted Lord de Winter. "If you have any preference you can point it out to me; and if it be not within a thousand leagues of London, attention will be paid to your wishes. I will begin again, then: —

"'Order to conduct to —— the person named Charlotte Backson, branded by the justice of the kingdom of France, but liberated after chastisement. She is to dwell in this place without ever going more than three leagues from it. In case of any attempt to escape, the penalty of death is to be applied. She will receive five shillings per day for lodging and food.'"

"That order does not concern me," replied Milady, coldly, "since it bears another name than mine."

"A name? Have you a name, then?"

"I bear that of your brother."

"Ay, but you are mistaken. My brother is only your second husband; and your first is still living. Tell me his name, and I will put it in the place of the name of Charlotte Backson. No? You will not? You are silent? Well, then you must be registered as Charlotte Backson."

Milady remained silent; only this time it was no longer from affectation, but from terror. She believed the order ready for execution. She thought that Lord de Winter had hastened her departure; she thought she was condemned

"And I reply to you, sir, that this abuse of power, this exile under a fictitious name, are infamous!"

"Would you like better to be hung in your true name, Milady? You know that the English laws are inexorable on the abuse of marriage. Speak freely. Although my name, or rather that of my brother, would be mixed up with the affair, I will risk the scandal of a public trial to make myself certain of getting rid of you."

Milady made no reply, but became as pale as a corpse.

"Oh, I see you prefer peregrination. That's well, Madame; and there is an old proverb that says, 'Travelling trains youth.' My faith! you are not wrong after all, and life is sweet. That's the reason why I take such care you shall not deprive me of mine. There only remains, then, the question of the five shillings to be settled. You think me rather parsimonious, don't you? That's because I don't care to leave you the means of corrupting your jailers. Besides, you will always have your charms left to seduce them with. Employ them, if your check with regard to Felton has not disgusted you with attempts of that kind."

"Felton has not told him," said Milady to herself. "Nothing is lost, then."

"And now, Madame, till I see you again! To-morrow I will come and announce to you the departure of my messenger."

Lord de Winter rose, saluted her ironically, and went out.

Milady breathed again. She had still four days before her. Four days would quite suffice to complete the seduction of Felton.

A terrible idea, however, rushed into her mind. She thought that Lord de Winter would perhaps send Felton himself to get the order signed by the Duke of Bucking-

ham. In that case Felton would escape her, — for in order to secure success, the magic of a continuous seduction was necessary. Nevertheless, as we have said, one circumstance re-assured her. Felton had not spoken.

As she would not appear to be agitated by the threats of Lord de Winter, she placed herself at the table and ate.

Then, as she had done the evening before, she fell on her knees and repeated her prayers aloud. As on the evening before, the soldier stopped his march to listen to her.

Soon after she heard lighter steps than those of the sentinel, which came from the end of the corridor and stopped before her door.

"It is he," said she. And she began the same religious chant which had so strongly excited Felton the evening before.

But although her voice, — sweet, full, and sonorous, — vibrated as harmoniously and as affectingly as ever, the

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE FOURTH DAY OF CAPTIVITY.

The next day, when Felton entered Milady's apartment he found her standing, mounted upon a chair, holding in her hands a cord made by means of torn cambric handkerchiefs, twisted into a kind of rope one with another, and tied at the ends. At the noise Felton made in entering, Milady leaped lightly to the ground, and tried to conceal behind her the improvised cord she held in her hand.

The young man was more pale than usual, and his eyes, reddened by want of sleep, denoted that he had passed a feverish night. Nevertheless, his brow was armed with a severity more austere than ever.

He advanced slowly towards Milady, who had seated herself, and taking an end of the murderous rope which by neglect, or perhaps by design, she allowed to be seen, "What is this, Madame?" he asked coldly.

"That? Nothing," said Milady, smiling with that painful expression which she knew so well how to give to her smile. "*Ennui* is the mortal enemy of prisoners; I had *ennui*, and I amused myself with twisting that rope."

Felton turned his eyes towards the part of the wall of the apartment before which he had found Milady standing in the armchair in which she was now seated, and over her head he perceived a gilt-headed screw, fixed in the wall for the purpose of hanging up clothes or weapons.

He started, and the prisoner saw that start, — for though her eyes were cast down, nothing escaped her.

"What were you doing on that armchair?" asked he.

"Of what consequence?" replied Milady.

"But," replied Felton, "I wish to know."

"Do not question me," said the prisoner; "you know that we who are true Christians are forbidden to lie."

"Well, then," said Felton, "I will tell you what you were doing, or rather what you meant to do; you were going to complete the fatal project you cherish in your mind. Remember, Madame, if our God forbids falsehood, he much more severely condemns suicide."

"When God sees one of his creatures persecuted unjustly, placed between suicide and dishonor, believe me, sir," replied Milady, in a tone of deep conviction, "God pardons suicide, for then suicide becomes martyrdom."

"You say either too much or too little; speak, Madame. In the name of Heaven, explain yourself."

"That I may relate my misfortunes for you to treat

"What have I, then, done to you," said Felton, much agitated, "that you should load me with such a responsibility before God and before men? In a few days you will be away from this place; your life, Madame, will then no longer be under my care, and," added he, with a sigh, "then you can do what you will with it."

"So," cried Milady, as if she could not resist giving utterance to a holy indignation, "you, a pious man, you who are called a just man, you ask but one thing — and that is that you may not be inculpated, annoyed, by my death!"

"It is my duty to watch over your life, Madame, and I will watch."

"But do you understand the mission you are fulfilling? Cruel enough, if I am guilty; but what name can you give it, what name will the Lord give it, if I am innocent?"

"I am a soldier, Madame, and fulfil the orders I have received."

"Do you believe, then, that at the day of the Last Judgment God will separate blind executioners from iniquitous judges? You are not willing that I should kill my body, and you make yourself the agent of him who would kill my soul."

"But I repeat it again to you," replied Felton, in great emotion, "no danger threatens you; I will answer for Lord de Winter as for myself."

"Dunce," cried Milady,—"dunce! who dares to answer for another man, when the wisest, when those most after God's own heart, hesitate to answer for themselves, and who ranges himself on the side of the strongest and the most fortunate, to crush the weakest and the most unfortunate."

"Impossible, Madame, impossible," murmured Felton,

who felt to the bottom of his heart the justness of this argument. "A prisoner, you will not recover your liberty through me; living, you will not lose your life through me."

"Yes," cried Milady, "but I shall lose that which is much dearer to me than life, I shall lose my honor, Felton; and it is you, you whom I make responsible, before God and before men, for my shame and my infamy."

This time Felton, immovable as he was, or appeared to be, could not resist the secret influence which had already taken possession of him. To see this woman, so beautiful, fair as the brightest vision, to see her by turns overcome with grief and threatening; to resist at once the ascendancy of grief and beauty, — it was too much for a visionary; it was too much for a brain weakened by the ardent dreams of an ecstatic faith; it was too much for a heart furrowed by the love of heaven that burns, by the hatred of men that devours.

Milady saw the trouble. She felt by intuition the flame of the opposing passions which burned with the

Felton stood before this strange apparition like one petrified.

"Who art thou? Who art thou?" cried he, clasping his hands. "Art thou a messenger from God; art thou a minister from hell; art thou an angel or a demon; callest thou thyself Eloa or Astarte?"

"Do you not know me, Felton? I am neither an angel nor a demon; I am a daughter of earth, I am a sister of thy faith, that is all."

"Yes, yes!" said Felton, "I doubted, but now I believe."

"You believe, and still you are an accomplice of that child of Belial who is called Lord de Winter! You believe, and yet you leave me in the hands of mine enemies, of the enemy of England, of the enemy of God! You believe, and yet you deliver me up to him who fills and defiles the world with his heresies and debaucheries, — to that infamous Sardanapalus whom the blind call the Duke of Buckingham, and whom believers name Antichrist!"

"I deliver you up to Buckingham? I? what mean you by that?"

"They have eyes," cried Milady, "but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not."

"Yes, yes!" said Felton, passing his hands over his brow, covered with sweat, as if to remove his last doubt. "Yes, I recognize the voice which speaks to me in my dreams; yes, I recognize the features of the angel who appears to me every night, crying to my soul, which cannot sleep: 'Strike, save England, save thyself, — for thou wilt die without having appeased God!' Speak, speak!" cried Felton, "I can understand you now."

A flash of terrible joy, but rapid as thought, gleamed from the eyes of Milady.

However fugitive this homicide flash, Felton saw it, and started as if its light had revealed the abysses of this

woman's heart. He recalled, all at once, the warnings of Lord de Winter, the seductions of Milady, her first attempts after her arrival. He drew back a step, and hung down his head, without, however, ceasing to look at her, as if, fascinated by this strange creature, he could not detach his eyes from her eyes.

Milady was not a woman to misunderstand the meaning of this hesitation. Under her apparent emotions her icy coolness never abandoned her. Before Felton replied, and before she should be forced to resume this conversation, so difficult to be sustained in the same exalted tone, she let her hands fall; and as if the weakness of the woman overpowered the enthusiasm of the inspired fanatic, she said: "But no, it is not for me to be the Judith to deliver Bethulia from this Holofernes. The sword of the eternal is too heavy for my arm. Allow me, then, to avoid dishonor by death; let me take refuge in martyrdom. I do not ask you for liberty, as a guilty one would, nor for vengeance, as would a Pagan. Let me die; that is all.

and impious men. But you, Madame, so beautiful in reality, you, so pure in appearance, must have committed great iniquities for Lord de Winter to pursue you thus."

"They have eyes," repeated Milady, with an accent of indescribable grief, "but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not."

"But," cried the young officer, "speak, then, speak!"

"Confide my shame to you," cried Milady, with the blush of modesty upon her countenance, — "for often the crime of one becomes the shame of another, — confide my shame to you, a man, and I a woman? Oh," continued she, placing her hand modestly over her beautiful eyes, "never! never! — I could not!"

"To me, to a brother?" said Felton.

Milady looked at him for some time with an expression which the young man took for doubt, but which, however, was nothing but observation, or rather the wish to fascinate.

Felton, in his turn a suppliant, clasped his hands.

"Well, then," said Milady, "I confide in my brother; I will dare to —"

At this moment the steps of Lord de Winter were heard; but this time the terrible brother-in-law of Milady did not content himself, as on the preceding day, with passing before the door and going away again. He paused, exchanged two words with the sentinel; then the door opened, and he appeared.

During the exchange of these two words Felton drew back quickly, and when Lord de Winter entered, he was several paces from the prisoner.

The baron entered slowly, sending a scrutinizing glance from Milady to the young officer.

"You have been here a very long time, John," said he. "Has this woman been relating her crimes to

you? In that case I can comprehend the length of the conversation."

Felton started; and Milady felt she was lost if she did not come to the assistance of the disconcerted Puritan.

"Ah, you fear your prisoner should escape!" said she. "Well, ask your worthy jailer what favor I this instant solicited of him."

"You demanded a favor?" said the baron, suspiciously.

"Yes, my Lord," replied the young man, confused.

"And what favor, pray?" asked Lord de Winter.

"A knife, which she would return to me through the grating of the door a minute after she had received it," replied Felton.

"There is some one, then, concealed here whose throat this amiable lady is desirous of cutting," said De Winter, in an ironical, contemptuous tone.

"There is myself," replied Milady.

"I have given you the choice between America and Tyburn," replied Lord de Winter. "Choose Tyburn, Madame. Believe me, the cord is more certain than the

"You hear him!" cried Milady, with vehemence, so that the baron might believe she was addressing Heaven, and that Felton might understand she was addressing him.

Felton lowered his head and reflected.

The baron took the young officer by the arm, and turned his head over his shoulder, so as not to lose sight of Milady till he was gone out.

"Well," said the prisoner, when the door was shut, "I am not so far advanced as I believed. De Winter has changed his usual stupidity into a strange prudence. It is the desire of vengeance, and how desire moulds a man! As to Felton, he hesitates. Ah, he is not a man like that cursed D'Artagnan. A Puritan only adores virgins, and he adores them by clasping his hands. A musketeer loves women, and he loves them by clasping his arms."

Milady waited, then, with much impatience, for she feared the day would pass away without her seeing Felton again. At last, in an hour after the scene we have just described, she heard some one speaking in a low voice at the door. Presently the door opened, and she perceived Felton.

The young man advanced rapidly into the chamber, leaving the door open behind him, and making a sign to Milady to be silent; his face was much agitated.

"What do you want with me?" said she.

"Listen," replied Felton, in a low voice. "I have just sent away the sentinel that I might remain here without anybody knowing it, in order to speak to you without being overheard. The baron has just related a frightful history to me."

Milady assumed her smile of a resigned victim, and shook her head.

Either you are a demon," continued Felton, "or the

baron — my benefactor, my father — is a monster. I have known you four days; I have loved him four years. I therefore may hesitate between you. Be not alarmed at what I say; I want to be convinced. To-night, after twelve, I will come and see you, and you shall convince me."

"No, Felton, no, my brother," said she; "the sacrifice is too great, and I feel what it must cost you. No, I am lost; do not be lost with me. My death will be much more eloquent than my life, and the silence of the corpse will convince you much better than the words of the prisoner."

"Be silent, Madame," cried Felton, "and do not speak to me thus; I came to entreat you to promise me upon your honor, to swear to me by what you hold most sacred, that you will make no attempt upon your life."

"I will not promise," said Milady, "for no one has more respect for a promise or an oath than I have; and if I make a promise I must keep it."

"Well," said Felton, "only promise till you have seen

delirious fervor, and depart in an apparent transport of joy.

As for her, she returned to her place with a smile of savage contempt upon her lips, and repeated, blaspheming, that terrible name of God, by whom she had just sworn without ever having learned to know him.

"My God," said she, "what a senseless fanatic! My God, it is I, — I, — and this fellow who will help me to avenge myself."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE FIFTH DAY OF CAPTIVITY.

MILADY had however achieved a half-triumph, and success doubled her forces.

It was not difficult to conquer, as she had hitherto done, men prompt to let themselves be seduced, and whom the gallant education of a court led quickly into her net. Milady was handsome enough not to find much resistance on the part of the flesh, and she was sufficiently skilful to prevail over all the obstacles of the mind.

But this time she had to contend with an unpolished nature, concentrated and insensible by force of austerity. Religion and its observances had made Felton a man in-

evil, — that immense sovereignty which reigns in all the details of human life, and by which, as in the Arabian fable, a single pomegranate seed is sufficient to re-construct a ruined world.

Milady, being well prepared for the reception of Felton, was able to erect her batteries for the next day. She knew she had only two days left; that when once the order was signed by Buckingham — and Buckingham would sign it the more readily from its bearing a false name, and he could not, therefore, recognize the woman in question — once this order signed, we say, the baron would make her embark immediately, and she knew very well that women condemned to exile employ arms much less powerful in their seductions than the pretendedly virtuous woman whose beauty is enlightened by the sun of the world, whose style the voice of fashion lauds, and whom a halo of aristocracy gilds with enchanting splendors. To be a woman condemned to a painful and disgraceful punishment is no impediment to beauty, but it is an obstacle to the recovery of power. Like all persons of real genius, Milady knew what suited her nature and her means. Poverty was repugnant to her; degradation took away two-thirds of her greatness. Milady was only a queen while among queens. The pleasure of satisfied pride was necessary to her domination. To command inferior beings was rather a humiliation than a pleasure for her.

She should certainly return from her exile, — she did not doubt that a single instant; but how long might this exile last? For an active, ambitious nature, like that of Milady, days not spent in climbing are inauspicious days. What word, then, can be found to describe the days which they occupy in descending? To lose a year, two years, three years, is to talk of an eternity; to return after the

death or disgrace of the cardinal, perhaps; to return when D'Artagnan and his friends, happy and triumphant, should have received from the queen the reward they had well acquired by the services they had rendered her, — these were devouring ideas that a woman like Milady could not endure. For the rest, the storm which raged within her doubled her strength, and she would have burst the walls of her prison if her body had been able to take for a single instant the proportions of her mind.

Then that which spurred her on additionally in the midst of all this was the remembrance of the cardinal. What must the mistrustful, restless, suspicious cardinal think of her silence, — the cardinal, not merely her only support, her only prop, her only protector at present, but still further, the principal instrument of her future fortune and vengeance? She knew him; she knew that at her return from a fruitless journey it would be in vain to tell him of her imprisonment, in vain to enlarge upon the sufferings she had undergone. The cardinal would reply, with the sarcastic calmness of the sceptic strong at once

sounded the floor and the walls, looked to the chimney and the doors, without, during this long and minute examination, he or Milady pronouncing a single word.

Doubtless both of them understood that the situation had become too serious to lose time in useless words and aimless wrath.

"Well," said the baron, on leaving her, "you will not escape to-night!"

At ten o'clock Felton came and placed the sentinel. Milady recognized his step. She was as well acquainted with it now as a mistress is with that of the lover of her heart; and yet Milady at the same time detested and despised this weak fanatic.

That was not the appointed hour. Felton did not enter.

Two hours after, as midnight sounded, the sentinel was relieved. This time it *was* the hour, and from this moment Milady waited with impatience. The new sentinel commenced his walk in the corridor. At the expiration of ten minutes Felton came.

Milady was all attention.

"Listen," said the young man to the sentinel. "On no pretence leave the door, for you know that last night my Lord punished a soldier for having quitted his post for an instant, although I, during his absence, watched in his place."

"Yes, I know it," said the soldier.

"I recommend you therefore to keep the strictest watch. For my part I am going to pay a second visit to this woman, who I fear entertains sinister intentions upon her own life, and I have received orders to watch her."

"Good!" murmured Milady; "the austere Puritan lies."

As to the soldier, he only smiled.

"Zounds, Lieutenant!" said he; "you are not unlucky in being charged with such commissions, particularly if my Lord has authorized you to look into her bed."

Felton blushed. Under any other circumstances he would have reprimanded the soldier for indulging in such pleasantry, but his conscience murmured too loud for his mouth to dare speak.

"If I call, come," said he. "If any one comes, call me."

"I will, Lieutenant," said the soldier.

Felton entered Milady's apartment. Milady arose.

"You are here!" said she.

"I promised you to come," said Felton, "and I have come."

"You promised me something else."

"What, my God?" said the young man, who in spite of his self-command felt his knees tremble and the sweat start from his brow.

"Here is the knife," said Felton, drawing from his pocket the weapon which he had brought, according to his promise, but which he hesitated to give to his prisoner.

"Let me see it," said Milady.

"For what purpose?"

"Upon my honor, I will instantly return it to you. You shall place it on that table, and you may remain between it and me."

Felton offered the weapon to Milady, who examined the temper of it attentively, and who tried the point on the tip of her finger.

"Well," said she, returning the knife to the young officer, "this is fine and good steel. You are a faithful friend, Felton."

Felton took back the weapon, and laid it upon the table, as he had agreed with the prisoner.

Milady followed him with her eyes, and made a gesture of satisfaction.

"Now," said she, "listen to me."

The request was needless. The young officer stood upright before her, awaiting her words as if to devour them.

"Felton," said Milady, with a solemnity full of melancholy, "imagine that your sister, the daughter of your father, speaks to you. While yet young, unfortunately handsome, I was dragged into a snare. I resisted. Ambushes and violences multiplied around me, but I resisted. The religion I serve, the God I adore, were blasphemed because I called upon that religion and that God, but still I resisted. Then outrages were heaped upon me, and as my soul was not subdued they wished to defile my body forever. Finally —"

Milady stopped, and a bitter smile passed over her lips.

"Finally," said Felton, — "finally, what did they do?"

"At length, one evening, my enemy resolved to para-

lyze the resistance he could not conquer. One evening he mixed a powerful narcotic with my water. Scarcely had I finished my repast, when I felt myself sink by degrees into a strange torpor. Although I was without mistrust, a vague fear seized me, and I tried to struggle against sleepiness. I arose. I wished to run to the window and call for help, but my legs refused their office. It appeared as if the ceiling sank upon my head and crushed me with its weight. I stretched out my arms. I tried to speak. I could only utter inarticulate sounds, and irresistible faintness came over me. I supported myself by a chair, feeling that I was about to fall, but this support was soon insufficient on account of my weak arms. I fell upon one knee, then upon both. I tried to pray, but my tongue was frozen. God doubtless neither heard nor saw me, and I sank upon the floor a prey to a slumber which resembled death.

"Of all that passed in that sleep, or the time which glided away while it lasted, I have no remembrance. The only thing I recollect is that I awoke in bed in a ground

"At times the state into which I was fallen appeared so strange that I believed myself dreaming. I arose trembling. My clothes were near me on a chair; I neither remembered having undressed myself, nor going to bed. Then by degrees the reality broke upon me, full of chaste terrors. I was no longer in the house where I had dwelt. As well as I could judge by the light of the sun, the day was already two-thirds gone. It was the evening before when I had fallen asleep; my sleep then must have lasted twenty-four hours! What had taken place during this long sleep?

"I dressed myself as quickly as possible; my slow and stiff motions all attested that the effects of the narcotic were not yet entirely dissipated. The chamber was evidently furnished for the reception of a woman; and the most finished coquette could not have formed a wish, but on casting her eyes about the apartment, she would have found that wish accomplished.

"Certainly I was not the first captive that had been shut up in this splendid prison; but you may easily comprehend, Felton, that the more superb the prison, the greater was my terror.

"Yes, it was a prison, for I tried in vain to get out of it. I sounded all the walls, in the hopes of discovering a door, but everywhere the walls returned a full and flat sound.

"I made the tour of the room at least twenty times, in search of an outlet of some kind; there was none. I sank exhausted with fatigue and terror into an armchair.

"Meantime, night came on rapidly, and with night my terrors increased. I did not know but I had better remain where I was seated. It appeared that I was surrounded with unknown dangers into which I was about to fall at every instant. Although I had eaten nothing since the evening before, my fears prevented my feeling hunger.

"No noise from without by which I could measure the time reached me; I only supposed it must be seven or eight o'clock in the evening, for it was in the month of October, and it was quite dark.

"All at once the noise of a door, turning on its hinges, made me start. A globe of fire appeared above the glazed opening of the ceiling, casting a strong light into my chamber; and I perceived with terror that a man was standing within a few paces of me.

"A table, with two covers, bearing a supper ready prepared, stood, as if by magic, in the middle of the apartment.

"That man was he who had pursued me during a whole year, who had vowed my dishonor, and who, by the first words that issued from his mouth, gave me to understand he had accomplished it the preceding night."

"Scoundrel!" murmured Felton.

"Oh, yes, scoundrel!" cried Milady, seeing the interest which the young officer, whose soul seemed to hang on her lips, took in this strange recital. "Oh, yes, scoundrel!

"There was, no doubt, in my look, my voice, my whole person, that sincerity of gesture, of attitude, of accent, which carries conviction to the most perverse minds, for he paused.

"'Your death?' said he; 'oh, no, you are too charming a mistress to allow me to consent to lose you thus, after I have had the happiness to possess you only a single time. Adieu, my charmer; I will wait to pay you my next visit till you are in a better humor.'

"At these words he blew a whistle; the globe of fire which lighted the room re-ascended and disappeared. I found myself again in complete darkness. The same noise of a door opening and shutting was repeated the instant afterwards; the flaming globe descended afresh, and I was completely alone.

"This moment was frightful; if I had any doubts as to my misfortune, these doubts had vanished in an overwhelming reality. I was in the power of a man whom I not only detested, but despised, — of a man capable of anything, and who had already given me a fatal proof of what he was able to do."

"But who, then, was this man?" asked Felton.

"I passed the night on a chair, starting at the least noise, for towards midnight the lamp went out, and I was again in darkness. But the night passed away without any fresh attempt on the part of my persecutor. Day came; the table had disappeared, only I had still the knife in my hand.

"This knife was my only hope.

"I was worn out with fatigue. Sleeplessness inflamed my eyes; I had not dared to sleep a single instant. The light of day re-assured me; I went and threw myself on the bed, without parting with the emancipating knife, which I concealed under my pillow.

"When I awoke, a fresh meal was served.

"This time, in spite of my terrors, in spite of my agony, I began to feel a devouring hunger. It was forty-eight hours since I had taken any nourishment. I ate some bread and some fruit; then, remembering the narcotic mixed with the water I had drunk, I would not touch that which was placed on the table, but filled my glass at a marble fountain fixed in the wall over my dressing-table.

"And yet, notwithstanding these precautions, I remained for some time in a terrible agitation of mind. But my fears were this time ill-founded; I passed the day without experiencing anything of the kind I dreaded.

"I took the precaution to half empty the *carafe*, in order that my suspicions might not be noticed.

"The evening came on, and with it darkness; but however profound was this darkness, my eyes began to accustom themselves to it. I saw, amid the shadows, the table sink through the floor; a quarter of an hour later it re-appeared, bearing my supper. In an instant, thanks to the lamp, my chamber was once more lighted

"Half-an-hour had not passed when the same symptoms began to appear; but as I had only drunk half a glass of the water, I contended longer, and instead of falling entirely asleep, I sank into a state of drowsiness which left me a perception of what was passing around me, while depriving me of the strength either to defend myself or to fly.

"I dragged myself towards the bed, to seek the only defence I had left, — my saving knife; but I could not reach the bolster. I sank on my knees, my hands clasped round one of the bedposts; then I felt that I was lost."

Felton became frightfully pale, and a convulsive tremor crept through his whole body.

"And what was most frightful," continued Milady, her voice altered, as if she still experienced the same agony as at that awful minute, "was that at this time I retained a consciousness of the danger that threatened me; was that my soul, if I may say so, waked in my sleeping body; was that I saw, that I heard. It is true that all was like a dream, but it was not the less frightful.

"I saw the lamp ascend, and leave me in darkness; then I heard the well-known creaking of the door, although I had heard that door open but twice.

"I felt instinctively that some one approached me; it is said that the doomed wretch in the deserts of America thus feels the approach of the serpent.

"I wished to make an effort; I attempted to cry out. By an incredible effort of will I even raised myself up, but only to sink down again immediately, and to fall into the arms of my persecutor."

"Tell me who this man was!" cried the young officer.

Milady saw at a single glance all the painful feelings she inspired in Felton by dwelling on every detail of her recital; but she would not spare him a single pang. The

more profoundly she wounded his heart, the more certainly he would avenge her. She continued, then, as if she had not heard his exclamation, or as if she thought the moment was not yet come to reply to it.

"Only this time it was no longer an inert body, without feeling, that the villain had to deal with. I have told you that without being able to regain the complete exercise of my faculties, I retained the sense of my danger. I struggled, then, with all my strength, and doubtless opposed, weak as I was, a long resistance, for I heard him cry out, 'These miserable Puritans! I knew very well that they tired out their executioners, but I did not believe them so strong against their lovers!'

"Alas! this desperate resistance could not last long. I felt my strength fail, and this time it was not my sleep that enabled the coward to prevail, but my swoon."

Felton listened without uttering any word or sound, except an inward expression of agony. The sweat streamed down his marble forehead, and his hand, under his coat, tore his breast.

Felton?" continued Milady, in the tone of a woman accusing herself of a crime. "This idea occurred to me, and did not leave me; it is of this homicidal thought that I now bear the punishment."

"Continue, continue!" said Felton; "I am eager to see you attain your vengeance!"

"Oh, I resolved that it should take place as soon as possible. I had no doubt he would return the following night. During the day I had nothing to fear.

"When the hour of breakfast came, therefore, I did not hesitate to eat and drink. I had determined to make believe sup, but to eat nothing. I was forced, then, to combat the fast of the evening with the nourishment of the morning.

"Only I concealed a glass of water, which remained after my breakfast, thirst having been the chief of my sufferings when I remained forty-eight hours without eating or drinking.

"The day passed away without having any other influence on me than to strengthen the resolution I had formed; only I took care that my face should not betray the thoughts of my heart, for I had no doubt I was watched. Several times, even, I felt a smile on my lips. Felton, I dare not tell you at what idea I smiled; you would hold me in horror —"

"Go on! go on!" said Felton; "you see plainly that I listen, and that I am anxious to know the end."

"Evening came; the ordinary events took place. During the darkness, as before, my supper was brought. Then the lamp was lighted, and I sat down to table. I only ate some fruit. I pretended to pour out water from the jug, but I only drank that which I had saved in my glass. The substitution was made so carefully that my spies, if I had any, could have no suspicion of it.

exhibited the same marks of languor
evening, but this time, as if I yielded
become familiarized with danger,
towards my bed, let my robe fall, and

where I had placed it, under my
to sleep, my hand grasped the
dagger.

passed away without anything fresh hap-
who could have said so the evening
to fear that he would not come.

I saw the lamp rise softly, and disappear in
the ceiling; my chamber was filled with
obscurity, but I made a strong effort to
darkness and obscurity.

minutes passed; I heard no other noise
of my own heart. I implored Heaven
me.

heard the well-known noise of the door,

breast was covered with a coat-of-mail; the knife was bent against it.

"'Ah, ah!' cried he, seizing my arm, and wresting from me the weapon that had so badly served me, 'you want to take my life, do you, my pretty Puritan? But that 's more than dislike, that 's ingratitude! Come, come, calm yourself, my sweet girl! I thought you had softened. I am not one of those tyrants who detain women by force. You don't love me. With my usual fatuity I doubted it; now I am convinced. To-morrow you shall be free.'

"I had but one wish; that was that he should kill me.

"'Beware!' said I, 'for my liberty is your dishonor.'

"'Explain yourself, my pretty sibyl!'

"'Yes; for as soon as I leave this place I will tell everything. I will proclaim the violence you have used towards me. I will describe my captivity. I will denounce this palace of infamy. You are placed on high, my Lord, but tremble! Above you there is the king; above the king there is God!'

"However perfect master he was over himself, my persecutor allowed a movement of anger to escape him. I could not see the expression of his countenance, but I felt the arm tremble upon which my hand was placed.

"'Then you shall not leave this place,' said he.

"'Very well,' cried I, 'then the place of my punishment will be that of my tomb. I will die here, and you will see if a phantom that accuses is not more terrible than a living being that threatens!'

"'You shall have no weapon left in your power.'

"'There is a weapon which despair has placed within the reach of every creature who has the courage to use it. I will allow myself to die with hunger.'

"'Come,' said the wretch, 'is not peace much better

than such a war as that? I will restore you to liberty this moment; I will proclaim you a piece of immaculate virtue; I will name you the Lucretia of England.'

"'And I will say that you are the Sextus. I will denounce you before men, as I have denounced you before God; and if it be necessary that, like Lucretia, I should sign my accusation with my blood, I will sign it.'

"'Ah!' said my enemy, in a jeering tone, 'that's quite another thing. My faith! everything considered, you are very well off here. You shall want for nothing, and if you let yourself die of hunger that will be your own fault.'

"At these words he retired. I heard the door open and shut, and I remained overwhelmed, less, I confess it, by my grief than by the mortification of not having avenged myself.

"He kept his word. All the day, all the next night passed away without my seeing him again. But I also kept my word with him, and I neither ate nor drank. I was, as I had told him, resolved to die of hunger.

voice I had recovered all my strength, — 'on the cross I swear that no promise, no menace, no force, no torture, shall close my mouth! On the cross I swear to denounce you everywhere as a murderer, as a thief of honor, as a base coward! On the cross I swear, if I ever leave this place, to call down vengeance upon you from the whole human race!'

"'Beware!' said the voice, in a threatening accent that I had never yet heard. 'I have an extraordinary means which I will not employ but in the last extremity to close your mouth, or at least to prevent any one from believing a word you may utter.'

"I mustered all my strength to reply to him with a burst of laughter.

"He saw that it was a merciless war between us, — a war to the death.

"'Listen!' said he. 'I give you the rest of to-night and all day to-morrow. Reflect: promise to be silent, and riches, consideration, even honor, shall surround you; threaten to speak, and I will condemn you to infamy.'

"'You?' cried I. 'You?'

"'To interminable, ineffaceable infamy!'

"'You?' repeated I. Oh, I declare to you, Felton, I thought him mad!

"'Yes, yes, I!' replied he.

"'Oh, leave me!' said I. 'Begone, if you do not desire to see me dash my head against that wall before your eyes!'

"'Very well, it is your own doing. Till to-morrow evening, then!'

"'Till to-morrow evening, then!' replied I, allowing myself to fall, and biting the carpet with rage."

Felton leaned for support upon a piece of furniture; and Milady saw, with the joy of a demon, that his strength would fail him perhaps before the end of her recital.

"'You are a prostitute,' said he, in a voice of thunder, 'and you shall undergo the punishment of prostitutes! Branded in the eyes of the world you invoke, try to prove to that world that you are neither guilty nor mad!'

"Then, addressing the man who accompanied him, 'Executioner,' said he, 'do your duty.'"

"Oh, his name, his name!" cried Felton. "His name, tell it me!"

"Then in spite of my cries, in spite of my resistance, — for I began to comprehend that there was a question of something worse than death, — the executioner seized me, threw me on the floor, fastened me with his bonds, and suffocated by sobs, almost without sense, invoking God, who did not listen to me, I uttered all at once a frightful cry of pain and shame. A burning fire, a red-hot iron, the iron of the executioner, was imprinted on my shoulder."

Felton uttered a groan.

"Here," said Milady, rising with the majesty of a queen, — "here, Felton, behold the new martyrdom invented for a pure young girl, the victim of the brutality of a villain. Learn to know the heart of men, and henceforth make yourself less easily the instrument of their unjust vengeance."

Milady, with a rapid gesture, opened her robe, tore the cambric that covered her bosom, and red with feigned anger and simulated shame, showed the young man the ineffaceable impression which dishonored that beautiful shoulder.

"But," cried Felton, "that is a *fleur-de-lis* which I see there."

"And therein consisted the infamy," replied Milady. "The brand of England! — it would be necessary to prove

what tribunal had imposed it on me, and I could have made a public appeal to all the tribunals of the kingdom; but the brand of France! — oh, by that, by *that* I was branded indeed!"

This was too much for Felton.

Pale, motionless, overwhelmed by this frightful revelation, dazzled by the superhuman beauty of this woman who unveiled herself before him with an immodesty which appeared to him sublime, he ended by falling on his knees before her as the early Christians did before those pure and holy martyrs whom the persecution of the emperors gave up in the circus to the sanguinary sensuality of the populace. The brand disappeared; the beauty alone remained.

"Pardon! pardon!" cried Felton, "oh, pardon!"

Milady read in his eyes *love! love!*

"Pardon for what?" asked she.

"Pardon me for having joined with your persecutors."

Milady held out her hand to him.

"What, Brother!" cried Milady, "must I name him again? Have you not yet divined who he is?"

"What?" cried Felton, "he — again he — always he? What, — the truly guilty?"

"The truly guilty," said Milady, "is the ravager of England, the persecutor of true believers, the base ravisher of the honor of so many women, — he who, to satisfy a caprice of his corrupt heart, is about to make England shed so much blood, who protects the Protestants to-day and will betray them to-morrow —"

"Buckingham! It is, then, Buckingham!" cried Felton, in a high state of excitement.

Milady concealed her face in her hands, as if she could not endure the shame which this name recalled to her.

"Buckingham, the executioner of this angelic creature!" cried Felton. "And thou hast not hurled thy thunder at him, my God! And thou hast left him noble, honored, powerful, for the ruin of us all!"

"God abandons him who abandons himself," said Milady.

"But he will draw down upon his head the punishment reserved for the damned!" said Felton, with increasing exultation. "He wills that human vengeance should precede celestial justice."

"Men fear him and spare him."

"I," said Felton, — "I do not fear him, nor will I spare him."

The soul of Milady was bathed in an infernal joy.

"But how can Lord de Winter, my protector, my father," asked Felton, "possibly be mixed up with all this?"

"Listen, Felton," resumed Milady, "for by the side of base and contemptible men there are often found great and generous natures. I had an affianced husband, a man whom

I loved, and who loved me, — a heart like yours, Felton, a man like you. I went to him and told him all; he knew me, that man did, and did not doubt an instant. He was a nobleman, a man equal to Buckingham in every respect. He said nothing; he only girded on his sword, wrapped himself in his cloak, and went straight to Buckingham Palace."

"Yes, yes," said Felton; "I understand how he would act. But with such men it is not the sword that should be employed; it is the poniard."

"Buckingham had left England the day before, sent as ambassador to Spain, to demand the hand of the Infanta for King Charles I., who was then only Prince of Wales. My affianced husband returned.

"'Hear me,' said he; 'this man is gone, and for the moment has consequently escaped my vengeance; but let us be united, as we were to have been, and then leave it to Lord de Winter to maintain his own honor and that of his wife.'"

termination to remain there for the rest of my life. But all my fortune is in England. Communication being closed by the war, I was in want of everything. I was then obliged to come back again. Six days ago, I landed at Portsmouth."

"Well?" said Felton.

"Well; Buckingham heard by some means, no doubt, of my return. He spoke of me to Lord de Winter, already prejudiced against me, and told him that his sister-in-law was a prostitute, a branded woman. The noble and pure voice of my husband was no longer here to defend me. Lord de Winter believed all that was told him with so much the more ease that it was his interest to believe it. He caused me to be arrested, had me conducted hither, and placed me under your guard. You know the rest. The day after to-morrow he banishes me, he transports me; the day after to-morrow he exiles me among the infamous. Oh, the train is well laid; the plot is clever. My honor will not survive it! You see, then, Felton, I can do nothing but die. Felton, give me that knife!"

And at these words, as if all her strength was exhausted, Milady sank, weak and languishing, into the arms of the young officer, who, intoxicated with love, anger, and voluptuous sensations hitherto unknown, received her with transport, pressed her against his heart, all trembling at the breath from that charming mouth, bewildered by the contact with that palpitating bosom.

"No, no," said he. "No, you shall live honored and pure; you shall live to triumph over your enemies."

Milady put him from her slowly with her hand, while drawing him nearer with her look; but Felton, in his turn, embraced her more closely, imploring her like a divinity.

"Oh, death, death!" said she, lowering her voice and

her eyelids, — "oh, death, rather than shame! Felton, my brother, my friend, I conjure you!"

"No," cried Felton, "no; you shall live, and you shall be avenged."

"Felton, I bring misfortune to all who surround me! Felton, abandon me! Felton, let me die!"

"Well, then, we will live and die together!" cried he, pressing his lips to those of the prisoner.

Several strokes resounded on the door; this time Milady really pushed him away from her.

"Hark," said she, "we have been overheard! Some one is coming! All is over! We are lost!"

"No," said Felton; "it is only the sentinel warning me that they are about to change guard."

"Then run to the door, and open it yourself."

Felton obeyed; this woman was now his whole thought, his whole soul.

He found himself face to face with a sergeant commanding a watch-patrol.

At that moment a burst of ironical laughter resounded through the corridor. The baron, attracted by the noise, in his chamber-gown, his sword under his arm, stood in the doorway.

"Ah," said he, "here we are, at the last act of the tragedy. You see, Felton, the drama has gone through all the phases I named; but be easy, no blood will flow."

Milady perceived that all was lost unless she gave Felton an immediate and terrible proof of her courage.

"You are mistaken, my Lord, blood will flow; and may that blood fall back on those who cause it to flow!"

Felton uttered a cry, and rushed towards her. He was too late; Milady had stabbed herself.

But the knife had fortunately, we ought to say skilfully, come in contact with the steel busk, which at that period, like a cuirass, defended the chests of women. It had glided down it, tearing the robe, and had penetrated slantingly between the flesh and the ribs. Milady's robe was not the less stained with blood in a second.

Milady fell down, and seemed to be in a swoon.

Felton snatched away the knife.

"See, my Lord," said he, in a deep, gloomy tone, "here is a woman who was under my guard, and who has killed herself!"

"Be at ease, Felton," said Lord de Winter. "She is not dead; demons do not die so easily. Be tranquil, and go wait for me in my chamber."

"But, my Lord —"

"Go, sir, I command you!"

At this injunction from his superior, Felton obeyed; but in going out, he put the knife into his bosom.

As to Lord de Winter, he contented himself with calling the woman who waited on Milady, and when she was

come, he recommended the prisoner, who was still fainting, to her care, and left them alone.

Meanwhile, all things considered and notwithstanding his suspicions, as the wound might be serious, he immediately sent off a mounted man to find a physician.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ESCAPE.

As Lord de Winter had thought, Milady's wound was not dangerous. So soon as she was left alone with the woman whom the baron had summoned to her assistance she opened her eyes.

It was, however, necessary to affect weakness and pain, — not a very difficult task for so finished an actress as Milady. Thus the poor woman was completely the dupe of the prisoner, whom, notwithstanding her hints, she persisted in watching all night.

But the presence of this woman did not prevent Milady from thinking.

There was no longer a doubt that Felton was convinced; Felton was hers. If an angel appeared to that young man as an accuser of Milady, he would take him, in the mental disposition in which he now found himself, for a messenger sent by the Devil.

Milady smiled at this thought, for Felton was now her only hope, — her only means of safety.

But Lord de Winter might suspect him; Felton himself might now be watched!

Towards four o'clock in the morning the doctor arrived; but since the time Milady stabbed herself, however short, the wound had closed. The doctor could therefore measure neither the direction nor the depth of it; he only satisfied himself by Milady's pulse that the case was not serious.

In the morning Milady, under the pretext that she had not slept well in the night and wanted rest, sent away the woman who attended her.

She had one hope, which was that Felton would appear at the breakfast hour; but Felton did not come.

Were her fears realized? Was Felton, suspected by the baron, about to fail her at the decisive moment? She had only one day left. Lord de Winter had announced her embarkation for the twenty-third, and it was now the morning of the twenty-second.

Nevertheless she still waited patiently till the hour for dinner.

Although she had eaten nothing in the morning, the dinner was brought in at its usual time. Milady then perceived, with terror, that the uniform of the soldiers who guarded her was changed.

Then she ventured to ask what had become of Felton.

She was told that he had left the castle an hour before on horseback. She inquired if the baron was still at the castle. The soldier replied that he was, and that he had

Milady smiled with joy. She was free now to give way to her transports without being observed. She traversed her chamber with the excitement of a furious maniac, or of a tigress shut up in an iron cage. *Certes*, if the knife had been left in her power, she would now have thought, not of killing herself, but of killing the baron.

At six o'clock Lord de Winter came in. He was armed at all points. This man, in whom Milady till that time had only seen a very simple gentleman, had become an admirable jailer. He appeared to foresee all, to divine all, to anticipate all.

A single look at Milady apprised him of all that was passing in her mind.

"Ay!" said he, "I see; but you shall not kill me to-day. You have no longer a weapon; and besides, I am on my guard. You had begun to pervert my poor Felton. He was yielding to your infernal influence; but I will save him. He will never see you again; all is over. Get your clothes together. To-morrow you will go. I had fixed the embarkation for the twenty-fourth; but I have reflected that the more promptly the affair takes place the more sure it will be. To-morrow, by twelve o'clock, I shall have the order for your exile, signed, *Buckingham*. If you speak a single word to any one before going aboard ship, my sergeant will blow your brains out. He has orders to do so. If when on the ship you speak a single word to any one before the captain permits you, the captain will have you thrown into the sea. That is agreed upon.

"*Au revoir*, then; that is all I have to say to-day. To-morrow I will see you again, to take my leave." With these words the baron went out. Milady had listened to all this menacing tirade with a smile of disdain on her lips, but rage in her heart.

Supper was served. Milady felt that she stood in need of all her strength. She did not know what might take place during this night which approached so menacingly, — for large masses of cloud rolled over the face of the sky, and distant lightning announced a storm.

The storm broke about ten o'clock. Milady felt a consolation in seeing nature partake of the disorder of her heart. The thunder growled in the air like the passion and anger in her thoughts. It appeared to her that the blast as it swept along dishevelled her brow, as it bowed the branches of the trees and bore away their leaves. She howled as the hurricane howled; and her voice was lost in the great voice of nature, which also seemed to groan with despair.

All at once she heard a tap at her window, and by the help of a flash of lightning she saw the face of a man appear behind the bars.

She ran to the window and opened it.

"Felton!" cried she. "I am saved."

"Yes," said Felton; "but silence, silence! I must

"Gives me pain, but will not prevent my walking."

"Be ready, then, at the first signal."

Milady shut the window, extinguished the lamp, and went, as Felton had desired her, to lie down on the bed. Amid the moaning of the storm she heard the grinding of the file upon the bars, and by the light of every flash she perceived the shadow of Felton through the panes.

She passed an hour without breathing, panting, with a cold sweat upon her brow, and her heart oppressed by frightful agony at every movement she heard in the corridor.

There are hours which last a year.

At the expiration of an hour, Felton tapped again.

Milady sprang out of bed and opened the window. Two bars removed formed an opening for a man to pass through.

"Are you ready?" asked Felton.

"Yes. Must I take anything with me?"

"Money, if you have any."

"Yes; fortunately they have left me all I had."

"So much the better, for I have expended all mine in chartering a vessel."

"Here!" said Milady, placing a bag full of louis in Felton's hands.

Felton took the bag and threw it to the foot of the wall.

"Now," said he, "will you come?"

"I am ready."

Milady mounted upon a chair and passed the upper part of her body through the window. She saw the young officer suspended over the abyss by a ladder of ropes. For the first time an emotion of terror reminded her that she was a woman. The dark space frightened her.

"I expected this," said Felton.

"It 's nothing, it 's nothing!" said Milady. "I will descend with my eyes shut."

"Have you confidence in me?" said Felton.

"You ask that?"

"Put your two hands together. Cross them; that 's right!"

Felton tied her two wrists together with his handkerchief, and then with a cord over the handkerchief.

"What are you doing?" asked Milady, with surprise.

"Pass your arms around my neck, and fear nothing."

"But I shall make you lose your balance, and we shall both be dashed to pieces."

"Don't be afraid. I am a sailor."

Not a second was to be lost. Milady passed her two arms round Felton's neck, and let herself slip out of the window. Felton began to descend the ladder slowly, step by step. Despite the weight of two bodies, the blast of the hurricane shook them in the air.

All at once Felton stopped.

Both remained suspended, motionless and breathless, within twenty paces of the ground, while the patrol passed beneath them laughing and talking. This was a terrible moment for the fugitives.

The patrol passed. The noise of their retreating footsteps and the murmur of their voices soon died away.

"Now," said Felton, "we are safe."

Milady breathed a deep sigh and fainted.

Felton continued to descend. Near the bottom of the ladder, when he found no more support for his feet, he clung with his hands; at length, arrived at the last step, he let himself hang by the strength of his wrists, and touched the ground. He stooped down, picked up the bag of money, and placed it between his teeth. Then he took Milady in his arms, and set off briskly in the direction opposite to that which the patrol had taken. He soon left the pathway of the patrol, descended across the rocks, and when arrived on the edge of the sea, whistled.

A similar signal replied to him; and five minutes after, a boat appeared, rowed by four men.

The boat approached as near as it could to the shore; but there was not depth enough of water for it to touch land. Felton walked into the sea up to his middle, being unwilling to trust his precious burden to anybody.

Fortunately the storm began to subside, but still the sea was disturbed. The little boat bounded over the waves like a nutshell.

"To the sloop," said Felton, "and row quickly."

The four men bent to their oars, but the sea was too high to let them get much hold of it.

However, they left the castle behind; that was the principal thing. The night was extremely dark. It was almost impossible to see the shore from the boat; they would therefore be less likely to see the boat from the shore.

A black point floated on the sea. That was the sloop. While the boat was advancing with all the speed its four rowers could give it, Felton untied the cord and then the handkerchief which bound Milady's hands together. When her hands were loosed he took some sea-water and sprinkled it over her face.

Milady breathed a sigh, and opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" said she.

"Saved!" replied the young officer.

"Oh, saved, saved!" cried she. "Yes, there is the sky; here is the sea! The air I breathe is the air of liberty! Ah, thanks, Felton, thanks!"

The young man pressed her to his heart.

"But what is the matter with my hands?" asked Milady; "it seems as if my wrists had been crushed in a vice."

Milady held out her arms; her wrists were bruised.

"Alas!" said Felton, looking at those beautiful hands, and shaking his head sorrowfully.

"Oh, it's nothing, nothing!" cried Milady. "I remember now."

"What orders?" asked Milady.

"You do not understand?" asked Felton.

"No; explain yourself, I beg."

"As he mistrusted me, he determined to guard you himself, and sent me in his place to get Buckingham to sign the order for your transportation."

"But if he mistrusted you, how could he confide such an order to you?"

"How could I be supposed to know what I was the bearer of?"

"That 's true! And you are going to Portsmouth?"

"I have no time to lose. To-morrow is the twenty-third, and Buckingham sets sail to-morrow with his fleet."

"He sets sail to-morrow! Where for?"

"For Rochelle."

"He need not sail!" cried Milady, forgetting her usual presence of mind.

"Be satisfied," replied Felton; "he will not sail."

Milady started with joy. She could read to the depths of the heart of this young man; the death of Buckingham was written there at full length.

"Felton," cried she, "you are as great as Judas Maccabeus! If you die, I will die with you; that is all I can say to you."

"Silence!" cried Felton; "we are here."

In fact, they touched the sloop.

Felton mounted the ladder first, and gave his hand to Milady, while the sailors supported her, for the sea was still much agitated.

An instant after they were on the deck.

"Captain," said Felton, "this is the person of whom I spoke to you, and whom you must convey safe and sound to France."

"For a thousand pistoles," said the captain.

"I have paid you five hundred of them."

"That's correct," said the captain.

"And here are the other five hundred," replied Milady, placing her hand upon the bag of gold.

"No," said the captain, "I make but one bargain; and I have agreed with this young man that the other five hundred shall not be due to me till we arrive at Boulogne."

"And shall we arrive there?"

"Safe and sound," said the captain; "as true as my name's Jack Butler."

"Well," said Milady, "if you keep your word, instead of five hundred, I will give you a thousand pistoles."

"Hurrah for you, then, my beautiful lady," cried the captain; "and may God often send me such passengers as your Ladyship!"

"Meanwhile," said Felton, "convey me to the little bay of —; you know it was agreed you should put in there."

It was agreed that Milady should wait for Felton till ten o'clock; if he did not return by ten o'clock she was to sail.

In that case, and supposing he was at liberty, he was to rejoin her in France, at the convent of the Carmelites at Béthune.

Felton took leave of Mil
a mere walk takes leave o

His whole body appeare
ness, only an unusual fire
effects of a fever; his bro
rally was; his teeth were c
short dry accent which ir
was at work within him.

As long as he remained
him to land, he kept his face
ing on the deck, followed hi
free from the fear of pursu
Milady's apartment before r
quire three hours to go from

Felton jumped on shore, cl
led to the top of the cliff, sal
took his course towards the

At the end of a hundred
decline, and he could only se

He immediately ran in th
which he saw at nearly half
out in the h-

accusations against the favorite of James I. and Charles I., furnished by two years of premature meditation and a long sojourn among the Puritans.

When he compared the public crimes of this minister — startling crimes, European crimes, if so we may say — with the private and unknown crimes with which Milady had charged him, Felton found that the more culpable of the two men which formed the character of Buckingham was the one of whom the public knew not the life. This was because his love, so strange, so new, and so ardent, made him view the infamous and imaginary accusations of Milady de Winter as, through a magnifying-glass, one views as frightful monsters atoms in reality imperceptible by the side of an ant.

The rapidity of his walk heated his blood still more; the idea that he left behind him, exposed to a frightful vengeance, the woman he loved, or rather whom he adored as a saint, the emotion he had experienced, present fatigue, — all together exalted his mind above human feeling.

He entered Portsmouth about eight o'clock in the morning. The whole population was on foot; drums were beating in the streets and in the port; the troops about to embark were marching towards the sea.

Felton arrived at the palace of the Admiralty, covered with dust, and streaming with perspiration. His countenance, usually so pale, was purple with heat and passion. The sentinel wanted to repulse him; but Felton called to the officer of the post, and drawing from his pocket the letter of which he was the bearer, he said, "A pressing message from Lord de Winter."

At the name of Lord de Winter, who was known to be one of his Grace's most intimate friends, the officer of the post gave orders to let Felton pass, who, besides, wore the uniform of a naval officer.

Felton passed into the palace.

At the moment he entered the vestibule, another man was entering likewise, dusty, out of breath, leaving at the gate a post-horse, which, on reaching the palace, tumbled on his fore knees.

Felton and he addressed Patrick, the duke's confidential lackey, at the same moment. Felton named Lord de Winter; the unknown would not name anybody, and pretended that it was to the duke alone he would make himself known. Each was anxious to gain admission before the other.

Patrick, who knew Lord de Winter was in affairs of the service, and in relations of friendship with the duke, gave the preference to the one who came in his name. The other was forced to wait, and it was easily to be seen how he cursed the delay.

The valet led Felton through a large hall in which waited the deputies from Rochelle, headed by the Prince de Soubise, and introduced him into a closet where Buckingham, just out of the bath, was finishing his toilet,

that he was prevented by the guard he is obliged to keep at the castle."

"Yes, I know that," said Buckingham; "he has a prisoner."

"It is of that prisoner I wish to speak to your Grace," replied Felton.

"Well, then, speak!"

"That which I have to say of her can only be heard by yourself, my Lord!"

"Leave us, Patrick," said Buckingham; "but remain within sound of the bell. I shall call you presently."

Patrick went out.

"We are alone, sir," said Buckingham; "speak!"

"My Lord," said Felton, "the Baron de Winter wrote to you the other day to request you to sign an order of embarkation relative to a young woman named Charlotte Backson."

"Yes, sir; and I answered him, to bring or send me that order and I would sign it."

"Here it is, my Lord."

"Give it to me," said the duke.

And taking it from Felton, he cast a rapid glance over the paper, and perceiving that it was the one that had been mentioned to him, he placed it on the table, took a pen, and prepared to sign it.

"Pardon, my Lord," said Felton, stopping the duke; "but does your Grace know that the name of Charlotte Backson is not the true name of this young woman?"

"Yes, sir, I know it," replied the duke, dipping the quill in the ink.

"Then your Grace knows her real name?" asked Felton, in a sharp tone.

"I know it;" and the duke put the quill to the paper. Felton grew pale.

that it is to Milady de Wi

"I know it perfectly, i
you know it."

"And will your Grace si

Buckingham looked at th

"Do you know, sir, th
strange questions, and that
them?"

"Reply to them, my Lor
stances are more serious than

Buckingham reflected that
Lord de Winter, undoubted
softened.

"Without remorse," said l
well as myself, that Milady
woman, and it is treating her
her punishment to transportat

The duke put his pen to th

"You will not sign that or
making a step towards the du

"I will not sign this order
why not?"

"Because you will look int
justice to the lady."

"I should do h-- "

"Bah! Are you mad, to talk to me thus?" said Buckingham.

"My Lord, excuse me! I speak as I can; I restrain myself. But, my Lord, think of what you are about to do, and beware of going too far!"

"What do you say? God pardon me!" cried Buckingham, "I really think he threatens me!"

"No, my Lord, I still plead. And I say to you: one drop of water suffices to make the full vase overflow; one slight fault may draw down punishment upon the head spared, despite many crimes."

"Mr. Felton," said Buckingham, "you will withdraw, and place yourself at once under arrest."

"You will hear me to the end, my Lord. You have seduced this young girl; you have outraged, defiled her. Repair your crimes towards her; let her go free, and I will exact nothing else from you."

"You will exact!" said Buckingham, looking at Felton with astonishment, and dwelling upon each syllable of the three words as he pronounced them.

"My Lord," continued Felton, becoming more excited as he spoke, — "my Lord, beware! All England is tired of your iniquities; my Lord, you have abused the royal power, which you have almost usurped; my Lord, you are held in horror by God and men. God will punish you hereafter, but I will punish you here!"

"Ah, this is too much!" cried Buckingham, making a step towards the door.

Felton barred his passage.

"I ask it humbly of you, my Lord," said he; "sign the order for the liberation of Milady de Winter. Remember that she is a woman whom you have dishonored."

"Withdraw, sir," said Buckingham; "or I will call my attendant, and have you placed in irons."

in the hands of the Devil, yo
ingham, raising his voice so as to at
people, without absolutely shouting

"Sign my Lord; sign the lib
Winter," said Felton, holding out a

"By force? You are joking? H

"Sign, my Lord!"

"Never."

"Never?"

"Help!" shouted the duke; and
sprang towards his sword.

But Felton did not give him time t
the knife with which Milady had stab
his bosom; at one bound he was upon

At that moment Patrick entered the
letter from France, my Lord."

"From France!" cried Buckingham
thing in thinking from whom that le

Felton took advantage of this momen
knife into his side up to the handle.

"Ah, traitor," cried Buckingham,
me!"

"Murder!" screamed Patrick.

Felton cast his eyes round for means
ing the door free. he [illegible]

by the throat, crying, "I knew it! I guessed it! but too late by a minute, unfortunate, unfortunate that I am!"

Felton made no resistance. Lord de Winter placed him in the hands of the guards, who led him, while awaiting further orders, to a little terrace commanding the sea; and then the baron hastened to the duke's chamber.

At the cry uttered by the duke and the scream of Patrick, the man whom Felton had met in the antechamber rushed into the chamber.

He found the duke reclining upon a sofa, with his hand pressed upon the wound.

"Laporte," said the duke, in a dying voice,—"Laporte, do you come from her?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the faithful cloak-bearer of Anne of Austria, "but too late, perhaps."

"Silence, Laporte, you may be overheard. Patrick, let no one enter. Oh, I cannot tell what she says to me! My God, I am dying!"

And the duke swooned.

Meanwhile, Lord de Winter, the deputies, the leaders of the expedition, the officers of Buckingham's household, had all made their way into the chamber. Cries of despair resounded on all sides. The news, which filled the palace with tears and groans, soon became known, and spread itself throughout the city.

The report of a cannon announced that something new and unexpected had taken place.

Lord de Winter tore his hair.

"Too late by a minute!" cried he,—"too late by a minute! Oh, my God, my God! what a misfortune!"

He had been informed at seven o'clock in the morning that a rope ladder floated from one of the windows of the castle; he had hastened to Milady's chamber, had found it empty, the window open, and the bars filed, had re-

[illegible]
[illegible]
as we have said, had [illegible].

The duke, however, w
little, re-opened his eyes, a

"Gentlemen," said he,
and Laporte — ah, is that
me a strange madman thi
which he has put me."

"Oh, my Lord!" cried t
sole myself."

"And you would be quite
said Buckingham, holding ou
know the man who deserve
whole life of another man; b

The baron went out sobbin

There only remained in the
Laporte and Patrick. A ph
none was yet found.

"You will live, my Lord,
faithful servant of Anne of
the duke's sofa.

"What has she written
feebly, streaming with blood
to speak of her he [illegible]

eyes of the duke; but Buckingham in vain tried to make out the writing.

"Read!" said he, — "read! I cannot see. Read, then! for soon, perhaps, I shall not hear, and I shall die without knowing what she has written to me."

Laporte made no further objection, and read: —

My Lord, — By that which, since I have known you, I have suffered by you and for you, I conjure you, if you have any care for my repose, to countermand those great armaments which you are preparing against France, to put an end to a war of which it is publicly said religion is the ostensible cause, and of which, it is generally whispered, your love for me is the concealed cause. This war may not only bring great catastrophes upon England and France, but misfortunes upon you, my Lord, for which I should never console myself.

Be careful of your life, which is menaced, and which will be dear to me from the moment I am not obliged to see an enemy in you.

Your affectionate

Anne.

Buckingham collected all his remaining strength to listen to the reading of the letter; then, when it was ended, as if he had met with a bitter disappointment, he asked, "Have you nothing else to say to me by the living voice, Laporte?"

"The queen charged me to tell you to watch over yourself, for she had advice that your assassination would be attempted."

"And is that all, — is that all?" replied Buckingham, impatiently.

"She likewise charged me to tell you that she still loved you."

"Ah," said Buckingham, "God be praised! My death, then, will not be to her as the death of a stranger!"

cognized as having belonged

"Now the scent-bag of wh
is embroidered in pearls."

Patrick again obeyed.

"Here, Laporte," said Buck
tokens I ever received from h
these two letters. You will n
and as a last memorial" — l
valuable object, — "you will

He still sought; but his e
countered only the knife which
of Felton, still smoking with
blade.

"And you will add to them
pressing the hand of Laporte
enough to place the scent-bag a
casket, and to let the knife fal
Laporte that he was no longer
last convulsion, which this tim
combat, he slipped from the sof

Patrick uttered a loud cry.

Buckingham tried to smile
checked his thought, which n
brow like a last kiss of love.

At this moment [illegible]

"Dead, dead!" cried Patrick.

At this cry all the crowd re-entered the apartment, and throughout the palace and town there was nothing but consternation and tumult.

As soon as Lord de Winter saw Buckingham was dead, he ran to Felton, whom the soldiers still guarded on the terrace of the palace.

"Wretch!" said he to the young man, who since the death of Buckingham had regained that coolness and self-possession which never after abandoned him, — "wretch! what have you done?"

"I have avenged myself!" said he.

"Avenged yourself," said the baron. "Rather say that you have served as an instrument to that accursed woman; but I swear to you that this crime shall be her last."

"I don't know what you mean," replied Felton, quietly, "and I am ignorant of whom you are speaking, my Lord. I killed the Duke of Buckingham because he twice refused you yourself to appoint me captain; I have punished him for his injustice, that is all."

De Winter, stupefied, looked on while the soldiers bound Felton, and could not tell what to think of such insensibility.

One thing alone, however, threw a shade over the pallid brow of Felton. At every noise he heard, the simple Puritan fancied he recognized the step and voice of Milady coming to throw herself into his arms, to accuse herself, and die with him.

All at once he started. His eyes became fixed upon a point of the sea, commanded by the terrace where he was. With the eagle glance of a sailor he had recognized there, where another would have only seen a gull hovering over the waves, the sail of a sloop which was directed towards the coast of France.

"What?" asked his Lordship.

"What o'clock is it?"

The baron drew out his watch. "I to nine," said he.

Milady had hastened her departure half. As soon as she heard the canno the fatal event, she had ordered the an The vessel was making way under a b distance from the coast.

"God has so willed it!" said he, v of a fanatic; but without, however, bei eyes from that ship, on board of which cied he could distinguish the white outli he had sacrificed his life.

De Winter followed his look, observe guessed all.

"Be punished *alone*, for the first, mise Lord de Winter to Felton, who was bei with his eyes turned towards the sea; you by the memory of my brother whor that your accomplice is not saved."

Felton lowered his head without pron

As to Lord de Winter, he descended and went straight to the port.

# CHAPTER XXX.

## IN FRANCE.

The first fear of the King of England, Charles I., on learning the death of the duke, was that such terrible news might discourage the Rochellais; he tried, says Richelieu in his Memoirs, to conceal it from them as long as possible, closing all the ports of his kingdom, and carefully keeping watch that no vessel should sail until the army which Buckingham was getting together had gone, taking upon himself, in default of Buckingham, to superintend the departure.

He carried the strictness of this order so far as to detain in England the ambassadors of Denmark, who had taken their leave, and the regular ambassador of Holland, who was to take back to the port of Flushing the Indian merchantmen of which Charles I. had made restitution to the United Provinces.

But as he did not think of giving this order till five hours after the event, — that is to say, till two o'clock in the afternoon, — two vessels had already left the port, the one bearing, as we know, Milady, who, already anticipating the event, was further confirmed in that belief by seeing the black flag flying at the mast-head of the admiral's ship.

As to the second vessel, we will tell hereafter whom it carried, and how it set sail.

During this time nothing new occurred in the camp at Rochelle; only the king, who was bored, as always, but perhaps a little more so in camp than elsewhere, resolved

with great pleasure to his roya
to return about the 15th of
M. de Tréville, being inform
packed his portmanteau; and
cause he knew the great desir
which his friends had of retur
out saying that he fixed upon
escort.

The four young men heard
hour after M. de Tréville, for th
he communicated it. It was th
ciated the favor the cardinal h
making him at last enter the
that circumstance he would have
the camp while his companions
It goes without saying that t
towards Paris had for a cause th
Bonacieux would run of meetin
thune with Milady, her mortal
fore had written immediately to
stress at Tours who had such fine
from the queen authority for
leave the convent, and to reti
or Belgium. They had not lon
Eight or ten days afterwards A

very partial to the little girl, to whom she intends to be more serviceable hereafter.

I salute you,

MARIE MICHON.

To this letter was added an order, conceived in these terms : —

At the Louvre, Aug. 10, 1628.

The superior of the convent of Béthune will place in the hands of the person who shall present this note to her the novice who entered the convent upon my recommendation and under my patronage. ANNE.

It may be easily imagined how the relationship between Aramis and a seamstress who called the queen her sister amused the young men ; but Aramis, after having blushed two or three times up to the whites of his eyes at the gross pleasantry of Porthos, begged his friends not to revert to the subject again, declaring that if a single word more was said to him about it, he would never again implore his cousin to interfere in such affairs.

There was no further question, therefore, about Marie Michon among the four musketeers, who besides had what they wanted : that was, the order to withdraw Madame Bonacieux from the convent of the Carmelites of Béthune. It was true that this order would not be of great use to them while they were in camp at Rochelle ; that is to say, at the other end of France. Therefore D'Artagnan was going to ask leave of absence of M. de Tréville, confiding to him candidly the importance of his departure, when the news was transmitted to him as well as to his three friends that the king was about to set out for Paris with an escort of twenty musketeers, and that they formed part of the escort.

Their joy was great. The lackeys were sent on before

with the baggage, and they set out on the morning of the sixteenth.

The cardinal accompanied his Majesty from Surgères to Mauzes; and there the king and his minister took leave of each other with great demonstrations of friendship.

The king, however, who sought distraction, while travelling as fast as possible, — for he was anxious to be in Paris by the twenty-third, — stopped from time to time to fly the magpie, a pastime for which the taste had been formerly inspired in him by De Luynes, and for which he had always preserved a great predilection. Out of the twenty musketeers sixteen, when this took place, rejoiced greatly at this relaxation; but the other four cursed it heartily. D'Artagnan, in particular, had a perpetual buzzing in his ears, which Porthos explained thus: "A very great lady has told me that this means that somebody is talking of you somewhere."

At length the escort passed through Paris on the twenty-third, in the night. The king thanked M. de Tréville, and permitted him to distribute furloughs for

nothing; I have plenty of money), I am at Béthune. I present my letter from the queen to the superior, and I bring back the dear treasure I go to seek, — not into Lorraine, not into Belgium, but to Paris, where she will be much better concealed, particularly while the cardinal is at Rochelle. Well, once returned from the country, half by the protection of her cousin, half through what we have personally done for her, we shall obtain from the queen what we desire. Remain, then, where you are, and do not exhaust yourselves with useless fatigue. Myself and Planchet are all that such a simple expedition requires."

To this Athos replied quietly: "We also have money left, — for I have not yet drunk all my share of the diamond, and Porthos and Aramis have not eaten all theirs. We can therefore use up four horses as well as one. But consider, D'Artagnan," added he, in a tone so solemn that it made the young man shudder, — "consider that Béthune is a city where the cardinal has given rendezvous to a woman who, wherever she goes, brings misery with her. If you had only to deal with four men, D'Artagnan, I would allow you to go alone. You have to do with that woman! We four will go; and I hope to God that with our four lackeys we may be in sufficient number."

"You terrify me, Athos!" cried D'Artagnan. "My God! what do you fear?"

"Everything!" replied Athos.

D'Artagnan examined the countenances of his companions, which, like that of Athos, wore an impression of deep anxiety; and they continued their route as fast as their horses could carry them, but without adding another word.

On the evening of the twenty-fifth, as they were entering Arras, and as D'Artagnan was dismounting at the inn

... Paris. At the mo
gateway into the street, the
in which he was wrapped, alth
of August, and lifted his hat,
with his hand the moment it l
eagerly over his eyes.

D'Artagnan, who had his e
became very pale, and let his

"What is the matter, Monsie
come, gentlemen, my master is i

The three friends hastened t
instead of being ill, ran towards
him at the door.

"Well, where the devil are
Athos.

"It is he!" cried D'Artagnan,
the sweat on his brow,—"it is he

"He? What he?" asked Ath

"He, that man!"

"What man?"

"That cursed man, my evil
always met with when threatened
he who accompanied that horribl
for the first time, he whom I was
our Athos, he whom I saw on t
P...

in an opposite direction from that in which we are going, that he has a fresh horse, and ours are fatigued, so that we shall disable our own horses without even a chance of overtaking him. Let the man go, D'Artagnan; let us save the woman."

"Monsieur, Monsieur!" cried a hostler, running out and looking after the unknown, — "Monsieur, here is a paper which dropped out of your hat! Eh, Monsieur, eh!"

"Friend," said D'Artagnan, "a half-pistole for that paper!"

"My faith, Monsieur, with great pleasure! Here it is!"

The hostler, enchanted with the good day's work he had done, returned to the yard. D'Artagnan unfolded the paper.

"Well?" eagerly demanded all his three friends.

"Nothing but one word!" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes," said Aramis, "but that one word is the name of some town or village."

"*Armentières*," read Porthos; "Armentières? I don't know such a place."

"And that name of a town or village is written in her hand!" cried Athos.

"Come on, come on!" said D'Artagnan; "let us keep that paper carefully, perhaps I have not thrown away my half-pistole. To horse, my friends, to horse!"

And the four friends flew at a gallop along the road to Béthune.

GREAT criminals bear about them which makes them surmount all them escape all dangers, up to wearied Providence has marked s pious fortunes.

It was thus with Milady. She both nations, and arrived at Boulo

When landing at Portsmouth, M woman whom the persecutions of Rochelle; when landing at Boulo passage, she passed for a Frenchwo persecuted at Portsmouth out of th

Milady had, likewise, the best of her noble appearance, and the lib distributed her pistoles. Freed fr ties by the affable smile and gall governor of the port, who kissed mained long enough at Boulogne letter, conceived in the following te

P. S. — According to the desire of your Eminence, I report at the convent of the Carmelites at Béthune, where I will await your orders.

Accordingly, that same evening Milady commenced her journey. Night overtook her; she stopped, and slept at an inn. At five o'clock the next morning she again proceeded, and in three hours after entered Béthune.

She inquired for the convent of the Carmelites, and went thither immediately.

The superior met her; Milady showed her the cardinal's order. The abbess assigned her a chamber, and had breakfast served.

All the past was effaced from the eyes of this woman; and her looks, fixed on the future, beheld nothing but the high fortunes reserved for her by the cardinal, whom she had so successfully served without his name being in any way mixed up with the sanguinary affair. The ever-new passions which consumed her gave to her life the appearance of those clouds which float in the heavens, reflecting sometimes azure, sometimes fire, sometimes the opaque blackness of the tempest, and which leave no traces upon the earth behind them but devastation and death.

After breakfast, the abbess came to pay her a visit. There is very little amusement in the cloister, and the good superior was eager to make the acquaintance of her new boarder.

Milady wished to please the abbess. This was a very easy matter for a woman so really superior as she was. She tried to be agreeable, and she was charming, winning the good superior by her varied conversation and by the graces of her whole personality.

The abbess, who was the daughter of a noble house, took particular delight in histories of the court, which so

seldom travel to the extremities of the kingdom, and which, above all, have so much difficulty in penetrating the walls of convents, at whose threshold the noise of the world dies away.

Milady, on the contrary, was quite conversant with all aristocratic intrigues, amid which she had constantly lived for five or six years. She made it her business, therefore, to amuse the good abbess with the worldly practices of the court of France, mixed with the eccentric pursuits of the king; she made for her the scandalous chronicle of the lords and ladies of the court, whom the abbess knew perfectly by name, touched lightly on the amours of the queen and the Duke of Buckingham, talking a great deal to induce her auditor to talk a little.

But the abbess contented herself with listening and smiling without replying a word. Milady, however, saw that this sort of narrative amused her very much, and kept at it; only she now let her conversation drift towards the cardinal.

The abbess listened more attentively, grew animated by degrees, and smiled.

"Good," thought Milady; "she takes a pleasure in my conversation. If she is a cardinalist, she has no fanaticism, at least."

She then went on to describe the persecutions exercised by the cardinal upon his enemies. The abbess only crossed herself, without approving or disapproving.

This confirmed Milady in her opinion that the abbess was rather royalist than cardinalist. Milady therefore continued, coloring her narrations more and more.

"I am very ignorant of these matters," said the abbess, at length; "but however distant from the court we may be, however remote from the interests of the world we may be placed, we have very sad examples of what you have related. And one of our boarders has suffered much from the vengeance and persecution of the cardinal."

"One of your boarders?" said Milady; "oh, my God! Poor woman! I pity her, then."

"And you have reason, for she is much to be pitied. Imprisonment, menaces, ill-treatment, — she has suffered everything. But after all," resumed the abbess, "Monsieur Cardinal has perhaps plausible motives for acting thus; and though she has the look of an angel, we must not always judge people by the appearance."

"Good!" said Milady to herself; "who knows! I am about, perhaps, to discover something here; I am in the vein."

She tried to give her countenance an appearance of perfect candor.

"Alas," said Milady, "I know it is so. It is said that we must not trust to the face; but in what, then, shall we place confidence, if not in the most beautiful work of the Lord? As for me, I shall be deceived all my life

perhaps, but I shall always have faith in a person whose countenance inspires me with sympathy."

"You would, then, be tempted to believe," said the abbess, "that this young person is innocent?"

"The cardinal pursues not only crimes," said she; "there are certain virtues which he pursues more severely than certain offences."

"Permit me, Madame, to express my surprise," said the abbess.

"At what?" said Milady, with the utmost ingenuousness.

"At the language you use."

"What do you find so astonishing in that language?" said Milady, smiling.

"You are the friend of the cardinal, for he sends you hither, and yet —"

"And yet I speak ill of him," replied Milady, finishing the thought of the superior.

"At least you don't speak well of him."

"That is because I am not his friend," said she, sighing,

"Then," said the abbess, looking at Milady with increasing interest, "I behold another poor victim?"

"Alas, yes," said Milady.

The abbess looked at her for an instant with uneasiness, as if a fresh thought suggested itself to her mind.

"You are not an enemy of our holy faith?" said she, hesitatingly.

"Who, — I?" cried Milady; "I a Protestant? Oh, no! I call to witness the God who hears us, that on the contrary I am a fervent Catholic!"

"Then, Madame," said the abbess, smiling, "be reassured; the house in which you are shall not be a very hard prison, and we will do all in our power to make you cherish your captivity. You will find here, moreover, the young woman of whom I spoke, who is persecuted, no doubt, in consequence of some court intrigue. She is amiable and well-behaved."

"What is her name?"

"She was sent to me by some one of high rank, under the name of Kitty. I have not tried to discover her other name."

"Kitty!" cried Milady. "What? Are you sure?"

"That she is called so? Yes, Madame. Do you know her?"

Milady smiled to herself at the idea which had occurred to her that this might be her old chambermaid. There was connected with the remembrance of this girl a remembrance of anger; and a desire of vengeance disordered the features of Milady, which, however, immediately recovered the calm and benevolent expression which this woman of a hundred faces had for a moment allowed them to lose.

"And when can I see this young lady, for whom I already feel so great a sympathy?" asked Milady.

"Why, this evening," said the abbess; "to-day even. But you have been travelling these four days, as you told me yourself. This morning you rose at five o'clock; you must stand in need of repose. Go to bed and sleep; at dinner-time we will rouse you."

Although Milady would very willingly have gone without sleep, sustained as she was by all the excitements which a new adventure awakened in her heart, ever thirsting for intrigues, she nevertheless accepted the offer of the superior. During the last fifteen days she had experienced so many and such various emotions that if her frame of iron was still capable of supporting fatigue, her mind required repose.

She therefore took leave of the abbess, and went to bed, softly rocked by the ideas of vengeance which the name of Kitty had naturally brought back to her thoughts. She remembered that almost unlimited promise which the cardinal had given her if she succeeded in her enterprise. She had succeeded; D'Artagnan was then in her power!

One thing alone frightened her: that was the remem-

abbess, accompanied by a young woman with light hair and delicate complexion, who fixed upon her a look full of benevolent curiosity.

The face of the young woman was entirely unknown to her. Each examined the other with great attention, while exchanging the customary compliments; both were very handsome, but of quite different styles of beauty. Milady, however, smiled in observing that she excelled the young woman by far in her high air and aristocratic bearing. It is true that the habit of a novice, which the young woman wore, was not very advantageous in a contest of this kind.

The abbess introduced them to each other. When this formality was ended, as her duties called her to chapel, she left the two young women alone.

The novice, seeing Milady in bed, was about to follow the example of the superior; but Milady stopped her.

"How, Madame," said she, "I have scarcely seen you, and you already wish to deprive me of your company, upon which I had counted a little, I must confess, for the time I have to pass here?"

"No, Madame," replied the novice, "only I thought I had chosen my time ill; you were asleep, you are fatigued."

"Well," said Milady, "what can those who sleep wish for, — a happy awakening? This awakening you have given me; allow me then to enjoy it at my ease," and taking her hand, she drew her towards the armchair by the bedside.

The novice sat down.

"How unfortunate I am!" said she; "I have been here six months without the shadow of recreation. You arrive, and your presence was likely to afford me delightful company; yet I expect, in all probability, to quit the convent at any moment."

"How, you are going soon?" asked Milady.

"At least I hope so," said the novice, with an expression of joy which she made no effort to disguise.

"I think I learned you had suffered persecutions from the cardinal," continued Milady; "that would have been another motive for sympathy between us."

"What I have heard, then, from our good mother is true; you have likewise been a victim of that wicked priest?"

"Hush!" said Milady; "let us not, even here, speak thus of him. All my misfortunes arise from my having said nearly what you have said before a woman whom I thought my friend, and who betrayed me. Are you also the victim of a treachery?"

"No," said the novice, "but of my devotion, — of a devotion to a woman I loved, for whom I would have laid down my life, for whom I would give it still."

"And who has abandoned you, — is that it?"

"I have been sufficiently unjust to believe so; but during the last two or three days I have obtained proof to the

"Hear me," said the novice; "we must trust in Heaven. There always comes a moment when the good you have done pleads your cause before God; and see, perhaps it is a happiness for you, humble and powerless as I am, that you have met with me, for if I leave this place, well — I have powerful friends, who, after having exerted themselves on my account, may also exert themselves for you."

"Oh, when I said I was alone," said Milady, hoping to make the novice talk by talking of herself, "it is not for want of friends in high places; but these friends themselves tremble before the cardinal. The queen herself does not dare to oppose the terrible minister. I have proof that her Majesty, notwithstanding her excellent heart, has more than once been obliged to abandon to the anger of his Eminence persons who had served her."

"Trust me, Madame; the queen may appear to have abandoned those persons, but we must not put faith in appearances. The more they are persecuted, the more she thinks of them; and often, when they least expect it, they have proofs of a kind remembrance."

"Alas!" said Milady, "I believe so; the queen is so good!"

"Oh, you know her, then, that lovely and noble queen, that you speak of her thus!" cried the novice, with enthusiasm.

"That is to say," replied Milady, driven into her intrenchments, "that I have not the honor of knowing her personally; but I know a great number of her most intimate friends. I am acquainted with M. de Putange; I met M. Dujart in England; I know M. de Tréville."

"M. de Tréville!" exclaimed the novice, "do you know M. de Tréville?"

"Yes, perfectly well, — intimately even."

"The captain of the king's Musketeers?"

"The captain of the king's Musketeers."

"Why, then, only see!" cried the novice, "we shall soon be well acquainted, almost friends. If you know M. de Tréville, you must have visited him?"

"Often!" said Milady, who, having entered this track, and perceiving that falsehood succeeded, was determined to follow it to the end.

"With him, then, you must have seen some of his musketeers?"

"All those he is in the habit of receiving!" replied Milady, for whom this conversation began to have a real interest.

"Name a few of those whom you know, and you will see if they are my friends."

"Well!" said Milady, embarrassed, "I know M. de Louvigny, M. de Courtivron, M. de Férussac."

The novice let her speak, then seeing that she paused, she said, "Don't you know a gentleman named Athos?"

Milady became as pale as the sheets in which she was

and free companions. Why do you not apply to them, if you stand in need of help?"

"That is to say," stammered Milady, "I am not really very intimate with any of them. I know them from having heard one of their friends, M. d'Artagnan, say a great deal about them."

"You know M. d'Artagnan!" cried the novice, in her turn seizing the hands of Milady and devouring her with her eyes.

Then remarking the strange expression of Milady's countenance, she said, "Pardon me, Madame; you know him by what title?"

"Why," replied Milady, embarrassed, — "why, by the title of friend."

"You deceive me, Madame," said the novice; "you have been his mistress!"

"It is you who have been his mistress, Madame!" cried Milady, in her turn.

"I?" said the novice.

"Yes, you! I know you now. You are Madame Bonacieux!"

The young woman drew back, filled with surprise and terror.

"Oh, do not deny it! Answer!" continued Milady.

"Well, yes, Madame," said the novice. "Are we rivals?"

The countenance of Milady was illumined by so savage a joy that under any other circumstances Madame Bonacieux would have fled in terror; but she was absorbed by jealousy.

"Speak, Madame!" resumed Madame Bonacieux, with an energy of which she might not have been believed capable. "Have you been, or are you, his mistress?"

"Oh, no!" cried Milady, with an accent that admitted no doubt of her truth. "Never, never!"

"I believe you," said Madame Bonacieux; "but why, then, did you cry out so?"

"Do you not understand?" said Milady, who had already overcome her agitation and recovered all her presence of mind.

"How can I understand? I know nothing."

"Can you not understand that M. d'Artagnan, being my friend, might take me into his confidence?"

"Truly?"

"Do you not perceive that I know all, — your abduction from the little house at St. Germain, his despair, that of his friends, and their useless inquiries up to this moment? How could I help being astonished when, without having the least expectation of such a thing, I meet you face to face, — you, of whom we have so often spoken together, you whom he loves with all his soul, you whom he had taught me to love before I had seen you! Ah, dear Constance, I have found you, then; I see you at last!"

at you!" and while saying these words, she absolutely devoured her by her looks. "Oh, yes, it is you indeed! From what he has told me, I know you now. I recognize you perfectly."

The poor young woman could not possibly suspect what frightful cruelty was behind the rampart of that pure brow, behind those brilliant eyes in which she read nothing but interest and compassion.

"Then you know what I have suffered," said Madame Bonacieux, "since he has told you what he has suffered; but to suffer for him is happiness."

Milady replied mechanically, "Yes, that is happiness." She was thinking of something else.

"And then," continued Madame Bonacieux, "my punishment is drawing to a close. To-morrow, this evening, perhaps, I shall see him again; and then the past will no longer exist."

"This evening?" asked Milady, roused from her reverie by these words. "What do you mean? Do you expect news from him?"

"I expect himself."

"Himself? D'Artagnan here?"

"Himself!"

"But that 's impossible! He is at the siege of Rochelle with the cardinal. He will not return till after the taking of the city."

"Ah, you fancy so! But is there anything impossible for my D'Artagnan, the noble and loyal gentleman?"

"Oh, I cannot believe you!"

"Well, read, then!" said the unhappy young woman, in the excess of her pride and joy, presenting a letter to Milady.

"The writing of Madame de Chevreuse!" said Milady to herself. "Ah, I always thought there was some secret

[illegible] in which your s
be concealed. Prepare, then, for y
despair of us.

Our charming Gascon has just pr
faithful as ever. Tell him that certa
him for the warning he has given.

"Yes, yes," said Milady; "the
you know what that warning wa

"No. I only suspect he has wa
some fresh machinations of the car

"Yes, that's it, no doubt!" said
letter to Madame Bonacieux, and
pensively upon her bosom.

At that moment they heard the g

"Oh!" cried Madame Bonacieu
dow, "can it be he?"

Milady remained still in bed, pe
many unexpected things happened
for the first time she was at a loss.

"He, he!" murmured she; "c
she remained in bed with her eye

"Alas, no!" said Madame Bona
don't know, although he seems to
he checks his pace; he stops at the

Milady sprang out of bed.

"You [illegible]

Milady was dressing herself all the time.

"Never mind! The man is coming here, do you say?"

"Yes, he has entered."

"It is for you or me!"

"My God, how agitated you seem!"

"Yes, I admit it. I have not your confidence; I fear the cardinal."

"Hush!" said Madame Bonacieux; "somebody is coming."

Immediately the door opened, and the superior entered.

"Did you come from Boulogne?" demanded she of Milady.

"Yes," replied she, trying to recover her self-possession. "Who wants me?"

"A man who will not tell his name, but who comes from the cardinal."

"And who wishes to speak with me?" asked Milady.

"Who wishes to speak to a lady recently come from Boulogne."

"Then let him come in, if you please."

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried Madame Bonacieux. "Can it be bad news?"

"I fear it."

"I will leave you with this stranger; but as soon as he is gone, if you will permit me, I will return."

"*Permit* you? I *beseech* you!"

The superior and Madame Bonacieux retired.

Milady remained alone, with her eyes fixed upon the door. An instant after, the jingling of spurs was heard upon the stairs, steps drew near, the door opened, and a man appeared.

Milady uttered a cry of joy; this man was the Comte de Rochefort, — the demoniacal tool of his Eminence.

"Ah," cried Milady and Roche

"Yes, it is I."

"And you come?" asked M

"From Rochelle; and you?

"From England."

"Buckingham?"

"Dead or desperately wound been able to hear anything of assassinated him."

"Ah," said Rochefort, with nate chance, — one that will deli you informed him of it?"

"I wrote to him from Boulog here?"

"His Eminence was uneasy, a

"I only arrived yesterday."

"And what have you been doi

"I have not lost my time."

"Oh, I don't doubt that."

"Do you know whom I have e

"No."

"Yes; Madame Bonacieux, with whose retreat the cardinal was unacquainted."

"Well, well," said Rochefort, "here is a chance which may pair off with the other! Monsieur Cardinal is indeed a privileged man!"

"Imagine my astonishment," continued Milady, "when I found myself face to face with this woman?"

"Does she know you?"

"No."

"Then she looks upon you as a stranger?"

Milady smiled. "I am her best friend."

"Upon my honor," said Rochefort, "it takes you, my dear countess, to perform such miracles!"

"And it is well I can, Chevalier," said Milady, "for do you know what is going on here?"

"No."

"They will come for her to-morrow or the day after, with an order from the queen."

"Indeed! And who?"

"D'Artagnan and his friends."

"Indeed, they will go so far that we shall be obliged to send them to the Bastille."

"Why is it not done already?"

"What would you? The cardinal has a weakness for these men which I cannot comprehend."

"Indeed!"

"Yes."

"Well, then, tell him this, Rochefort. Tell him that our conversation at the inn of the Red Dovecot was overheard by these four men; tell him that after his departure one of them came up to me and took from me by violence the safe-conduct which he had given me; tell him they warned Lord de Winter of my journey to England; that this time they nearly foiled my mission as

they foiled the affair of the studs; tell him that among these four men two only are to be feared, — D'Artagnan and Athos; tell him that the third, Aramis, is the lover of Madame de Chevreuse, — he may be left alone, we know his secret, and it may be useful; as to the fourth, Porthos, he is a fool, a simpleton, a blustering booby, not worth troubling himself about."

"But these four men must be now at the siege of Rochelle?"

"I thought so too; but a letter which Madame Bonacieux has received from Madame the Constable, and which she has had the imprudence to show me, leads me to believe that these four men, on the contrary, are on the road hither to take her away."

"The devil! What 's to be done?"

"What did the cardinal say about me?"

"I was to take your despatches, written or verbal, and return by post; and when he shall know what you have done, he will advise what you have to do."

"I must, then, remain here?"

"That 's true; but is this little woman, then, to escape his Eminence?"

"Bah!" said Milady, with a smile that belonged only to herself; "you forget that I am her best friend."

"Ah, that 's true! I may then tell the cardinal, with respect to this little woman —"

"That he may be at ease."

"Is that all?"

"He will know what that means."

"He will guess, at least. Now, then, what had I better do?"

"Return instantly. It appears to me that the news you bear is worth the trouble of a little diligence."

"My chaise broke down coming into Lilliers."

"Capital!"

"What, *capital?*"

"Yes; I want your chaise."

"And how shall I travel, then?"

"On horseback."

"You talk very comfortably, — a hundred and eighty leagues!"

"What 's that?"

"One can do it! Afterwards?"

"Afterwards? Why, in passing through Lilliers you will send me your chaise, with an order to your servant to place himself at my disposal."

"Well."

"You have, no doubt, some order from the cardinal about you?"

"I have my *full power*."

"Show it to the abbess, and tell her that some one will come and fetch me, either to-day or to-morrow, and that I am to follow the person who presents himself in your name."

inspire confidence in that poor little Ma

"That 's true. Now, will you make that has happened?"

"Why, I have related the events t a good memory; repeat what I have t may be lost."

"You are right; only let me know w that I may not run needlessly about the

"That 's correct; wait!"

"Do you want a map?"

"Oh, I know this country marvellous

"You? When were you here?"

"I was brought up here."

"Truly?"

"It is worth something, you see, to ha up somewhere."

"You will wait for me, then?"

"Let me reflect a little! Ay, that Armentières."

"Where is that Armentières?"

"A little town on the Lys; I shall or the river, and I shall be in a foreign co

"Capital! but it is understood you wi river in case of danger."

"That is well ..."

"To the proof."

"Give him to me. Nobody knows him. I will leave him at the place I quit, and he will conduct you to me."

"And you say you will wait for me at Armentières?"

"At Armentières."

"Write that name on a bit of paper, lest I should forget it. There is nothing compromising in the name of a town. Is it not so?"

"Eh, who knows? Never mind," said Milady, writing the name on half a sheet of paper; "I will compromise myself."

"Well," said Rochefort, taking the paper from Milady, folding it, and placing it in the lining of his hat, "you may be easy. I will do as children do, for fear of losing the paper, — repeat the name along the route. Now, is that all?"

"I believe so."

"Let us see: Buckingham dead or grievously wounded; your conversation with the cardinal overheard by the four musketeers; Lord de Winter warned of your arrival at Portsmouth; D'Artagnan and Athos to the Bastille; Aramis the lover of Madame de Chevreuse; Porthos an ass; Madame Bonacieux found again; to send you the chaise as soon as possible; to place my lackey at your disposal; to make you out a victim of the cardinal in order that the abbess may entertain no suspicion; Armentières, on the banks of the Lys. Is that all, then?"

"In truth, my dear chevalier, you are a miracle of memory. *À propos*, add one thing —"

"What?"

"I saw some very pretty woods which almost touch the convent garden. Say that I am permitted to walk in those woods. Who knows? Perhaps I shall stand in need of a back-door for retreat."

"You think of everything."

"And you forget one thing."

"What?"

"To ask me if I want money."

"That's true. How much do you want?"

"All you have in gold."

"I have five hundred pistoles, or thereabouts."

"I have as much. With a thousand pistoles one may face everything. Empty your pockets."

"There."

"Right. And you go —"

"In an hour, — time to eat a morsel, during which I shall send for a posthorse."

"Capital! Adieu, Chevalier."

"Adieu, Countess."

"Commend me to the cardinal."

"Commend me to Satan."

Milady and Rochefort exchanged a smile and separated. An hour afterwards Rochefort set out at a grand gallop; five hours after that he passed through Arras.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE DROP OF WATER.

Rochefort had scarcely departed when Madame Bonacieux re-entered. She found Milady with a smiling countenance.

"Well," said the young woman, "what you dreaded has happened. This evening, or to-morrow, the cardinal will send some one to take you away."

"Who told you that, my dear?" asked Milady.

"I heard it from the mouth of the messenger himself."

"Come and sit down close to me," said Milady.

"Here I am."

"Wait till I assure myself that nobody hears us."

"Why all these precautions?"

"You shall know."

Milady arose, went to the door, opened it, looked in the corridor, and then returned and seated herself close to Madame Bonacieux.

"Then," said she, "he has well played his part."

"Who has?"

"He who just now presented himself to the abbess as a messenger from the cardinal."

"It was, then, a part he was playing?"

"Yes, my child."

"That man, then, was not —"

"That man," said Milady, lowering her voice, "is my brother."

"Your brother!" cried Madame Bonacieux.

was coming to my assistance to take m
it were necessary, met with the emissa
who was coming in search of me. He
a solitary and retired part of the road h
and required the messenger to deliver up
of which he was the bearer. The messe
brother killed him."

"Oh!" said Madame Bonacieux, sh

"Remember, that was the only m
brother determined to substitute cunnin
took the papers, and presented himse
emissary of the cardinal, and in an
carriage will come to take me away by
Eminence."

"I understand. It is your brother
carriage."

"Exactly; but that is not all. That
received, and which you believe to be f
Chevreuse —"

"Well?"

"It is a forgery."

"How can that be?"

"Yes, a forgery; it is a snare to preve
any resistance when they come to fetch
"But it is D'A

uniform of musketeers. You would have been summoned to the gate; you would have believed yourself about to meet friends; you would have been abducted, and conducted back to Paris."

"Oh, my God! My senses fail me amid such a chaos of iniquities. I feel, if this continues," said Madame Bonacieux, raising her hands to her forehead, "I shall go mad!"

"Stop—"

"What?"

"I hear a horse's steps; it is my brother setting off again. I should like to offer him a last salute. Come!"

Milady opened the window, and made a sign to Madame Bonacieux to join her. The young woman complied.

Rochefort passed at a gallop.

"Adieu, Brother!" cried Milady.

The chevalier raised his head, saw the two young women, and without stopping, waved his hand in a friendly way to Milady.

"The good George!" said she, closing the window with an expression of countenance full of affection and melancholy. And she resumed her seat, as if plunged in reflections entirely personal.

"Dear lady," said Madame Bonacieux, "pardon me for interrupting you; but what do you advise me to do? Good Heaven! You have more experience than I have. Speak; I will listen."

"In the first place," said Milady, "it is possible I may be deceived, and that D'Artagnan and his friends may really come to your assistance."

"Oh, that would be too much!" cried Madame Bonacieux; "so much happiness is not in store for me!"

"Then you comprehend it would be only a question of time, a sort of race, which should arrive first. If your

friends are the more speedy, you are saved; if the satellites of the cardinal, you are lost."

"Oh, yes, yes, lost beyond redemption! What then to do? What to do?"

"There would be a very simple means, very natural —"

"Tell me what!"

"To wait, concealed in the neighborhood, and assure yourself who are the men who come to ask for you."

"But where can I wait?"

"Oh, there is no difficulty in that. I shall stop and conceal myself a few leagues hence, until my brother can rejoin me. Well, I take you with me; we conceal ourselves, and wait together."

"But I shall not be allowed to go; I am almost a prisoner."

"As they believe that I go in consequence of an order from the cardinal, no one will believe you anxious to follow me."

"Well?"

"Well! The carriage is at the door; you bid me adieu;

"Doubtless. Has he not seen M. d'Artagnan at my house?"

"Oh, yes, yes; you are right. Thus all may go well, — all may be for the best; but we do not go far from this place?"

"Seven or eight leagues at most. We will keep on the frontiers, for instance; and at the first alarm we can leave France."

"And what can we do there?"

"Wait."

"But if they come?"

"My brother's carriage will be here first."

"If I should happen to be any distance from you when the carriage comes for you, — at dinner or supper, for instance?"

"Do one thing."

"What is that?"

"Tell your good superior that in order that we may be as much together as possible, you ask her permission to share my repast."

"Will she permit it?"

"What inconvenience can it be?"

"Oh, delightful! In this way we shall not be separated for an instant."

"Well, go down to her, then, to make your request. I feel my head a little confused; I will take a turn in the garden."

"Go; and where shall I find you?"

"Here, in an hour."

"Here, in an hour. Oh, you are so kind, and I am so grateful!"

"How can I avoid interesting myself for one who is so beautiful and so amiable? Are you not the beloved of one of my best friends?"

"Yes."

"Go along this corridor, down s
are in it."

"Excellent; thank you!"

And the two women parted, smiles.

Milady had told the truth,—l for her ill-arranged plans clashed o She required to be alone that she l a little into order. She saw vague stood in need of a little silence and ideas, as yet confused, a distinct plan.

What was most pressing was to g away, and convey her to a place c matters required, make her a hosta have doubts of the issue of this t her enemies showed as much pe animosity.

Besides, she felt as we feel when —that this issue was near, and terrible.

The principal thing for her then to keep Madame Bonacieux in her nacieux was the very life of D'A

with her at Armentières, it would be easy to make her believe that D'Artagnan had not come to Béthune. In fifteen days at most, Rochefort would be back; besides, during that fifteen days she would have time to think how she could best avenge herself on the four friends. She would not be weary, thank God! for she should enjoy the sweetest pastime such events could accord a woman of her character, — perfecting a beautiful vengeance.

Revolving all this in her mind, she cast her eyes around her, and arranged the topography of the garden in her head. Milady was like a good general who contemplates at the same time victory and defeat, and who is quite prepared, according to the chances of the battle, to march forward or to beat a retreat.

At the end of an hour she heard a soft voice calling her; it was Madame Bonacieux's. The good abbess had naturally consented to her request; and as a commencement, they were to sup together.

On reaching the courtyard, they heard the noise of a carriage which stopped at the gate.

Milady listened.

"Do you hear anything?" said she.

"Yes, the rolling of a carriage."

"It is the one my brother sends for us."

"Oh, my God!"

"Come, come! courage!"

The bell of the convent gate was sounded; Milady was not mistaken.

"Go to your chamber," said she to Madame Bonacieux; "you have perhaps some jewels you would like to take."

"I have his letters," said she.

"Well, go and fetch them, and come to my apartment. We will snatch some supper; we shall perhaps travel part of the night, and must keep our strength up."

... be safe; and think
to do is for *his* sake."

"Yes, yes, everything for him.
courage by a single word; go, I wi

Milady ran up to her apartme
found Rochefort's lackey, and gave

He was to wait at the gate; i
keteers should appear, the carriage
possible, pass around the convent,
Milady at a little village which was
side of the wood. In this case Mi
garden and gain the village on foot.
said, Milady was admirably acquaint
France.

If the musketeers did not appear, t
as had been agreed; Madame Bonaci
the carriage as if to bid her adieu,
away Madame Bonacieux.

Madame Bonacieux came in; and
picion, if she had any, Milady repeat
fore her, the latter part of her instruc

Milady asked some questions about
a chaise drawn by three horses, dri
Rochefort's lackey would precede it,

Milady was wrong in fearing that

woman had had so great and so fatal a share in the misfortune of her life.

"You see," said she, when the lackey had gone out, "everything is ready. The abbess suspects nothing, and believes that I am taken by order of the cardinal. This man goes to give his last orders; take the least thing, drink a finger of wine, and let us be gone."

"Yes," said Madame Bonacieux, mechanically, — "yes, let us be gone."

Milady made her a sign to sit down opposite, poured her a small glass of Spanish wine, and helped her to the wing of a chicken.

"See," said she, "if everything does not second us! Here is night coming on; by daybreak we shall have reached our retreat, and nobody can guess where we are. Come, courage! take something."

Madame Bonacieux ate a few mouthfuls mechanically, and just touched the glass with her lips.

"Come, come!" said Milady, lifting hers to her mouth, "do as I do."

But at the moment the glass touched her lips, her hand remained suspended; she heard something on the road which sounded like the rattling of a distant gallop. Then it drew nearer, and it seemed to her, almost at the same time, that she heard the neighing of horses.

This noise acted upon her joy like the storm which awakens the sleeper in the midst of a happy dream; she grew pale, and ran to the window, while Madame Bonacieux, rising all in a tremble, supported herself upon her chair to avoid falling. Nothing was yet to be seen, only they heard the galloping draw nearer.

"Oh, my God!" said Madame Bonacieux, "what is that noise?"

"That of either our friends or our enemies," said Mi-

The noise became louder; tl
than a hundred and fifty paces
yet to be seen, it was because
The noise became so distinct
counted by the rattle of their h

Milady gazed with all the pow
just light enough for her to see

All at once, at the turning
glitter of laced hats and the
counted two, then five, then
of them preceded the rest by
horse.

Milady uttered a stifled groan.
she recognized D'Artagnan.

"Oh, my God, my God," cri
"what is it?"

"It is the uniform of the carc
instant to be lost! Fly, fly!"

"Yes, yes, let us fly!" repea
but without being able to make
to the spot by terror.

They heard the horsemen pass

"Come, then, come, then!" crie
the young woman along by the
garden, we yet can flee. I have

which at the approach of the musketeers set off at a gallop. Then three or four shots were fired.

"For the last time, will you come?" cried Milady.

"Oh, my God, my God! you see my strength fails me; you see plainly I cannot walk. Flee alone!"

"Flee alone, and leave you here? No, no, never!" cried Milady.

All at once she paused, a livid flash darted from her eyes; she ran to the table, emptied into Madame Bonacieux's glass the contents of a ring which she opened with singular quickness. It was a grain of a reddish color, which dissolved immediately.

Then, taking the glass with a firm hand, she said, "Drink. This wine will give you strength; drink!" And she put the glass to the lips of the young woman, who drank mechanically.

"This is not the way that I wished to avenge myself," said Milady, replacing the glass upon the table, with an infernal smile, "but, my faith! we do what we can!" And she rushed out of the room.

Madame Bonacieux saw her go without being able to follow her; she was like people who dream they are pursued, and who in vain try to walk.

A few moments passed; a great noise was heard at the gate. Every instant Madame Bonacieux expected to see Milady, but she did not return. Several times, with terror, no doubt, the cold sweat burst from her burning brow.

At length she heard the grating of the hinges of the opening gates; the noise of boots and spurs resounded on the stairs. There was a great murmur of voices which continued to draw near, amid which she seemed to hear her own name pronounced.

All at once she uttered a loud cry of joy, and darted

Constance? Constance? R
"where are you? where are you
At the same moment the door
shock, rather than opened; sever
chamber. Madame Bonacieux ha
without the power of moving.

D'Artagnan threw down a yet
held in his hand, and fell on his k
Athos replaced his in his belt; P
held their drawn swords in their h
their scabbards.

"Oh, D'Artagnan, my beloved D
come, then, at last! You have n
indeed thee!"

"Yes, yes, Constance. Reunited

"Oh, it was in vain she told me
I hoped in silence. I was not willi
done well! How happy I am!"

At this word *she*, Athos, who had
started up.

"*She!* What she?" asked D'A

"Why, my companion. She wh
me wished to take me from my perse
taking you for the cardinal's Guards

"Your companion!" cried D'Art

"Her name, her name!" cried D'Artagnan. "My God, can you not remember her name?"

"Yes, it was pronounced in my hearing once. Stop — but — it is very strange — oh, my God, my head swims! I cannot see!"

"Help, help, my friends! her hands are icy cold," cried D'Artagnan. "She is ill! Great God, she is losing her senses!"

While Porthos was calling for help with all the power of his strong voice, Aramis ran to the table to get a glass of water; but he stopped at seeing the horrible alteration that had taken place in the countenance of Athos, who, standing before the table, his hair rising from his head, his eyes fixed in stupor, was looking at one of the glasses, and appeared a prey to the most horrible doubt.

"Oh!" said Athos, "oh, no, it is impossible! God would not permit such a crime!"

"Water, water!" cried D'Artagnan. "Water!"

"Oh, poor woman, poor woman!" murmured Athos, in a broken voice.

Madame Bonacieux opened her eyes under the kisses of D'Artagnan.

"She revives!" cried the young man. "Oh, my God, my God, I thank thee!"

"Madame!" said Athos, — "Madame, in the name of Heaven, whose empty glass is this?"

"Mine, Monsieur," said the young woman, in a dying voice.

"But who poured the wine for you that was in this glass?"

"She."

"But who is *she?*"

"Oh, I remember!" said Madame Bonacieux; "the Comtesse de Winter."

panting into the arms of Por

D'Artagnan seized the hands of
difficult to be described.

"And what do you believe?"
by sobs.

"I believe everything," said Ath
the blood sprang to avoid sighing.

"D'Artagnan, D'Artagnan!" cri
"where art thou? Do not leave
dying!"

D'Artagnan released the hands o
held clasped in both his own, and l
beautiful face was distorted with a
had no longer their sight; a convul
her whole body; the sweat rolled fr

"In the name of Heaven, run, call
Call for help!"

"Useless!" said Athos, — "usele
which *she* pours there is no antido

"Yes, yes! Help, help!" murm
cieux; "help!"

Then, collecting all her strength,
the young man between her hands,
instant as if her whole soul passed in
a sobbing cry pressed her lips to his

D'Artagnan pressed nothing but a corpse in his arms. The young man uttered a cry, and fell by the side of his mistress as pale and as icy as herself.

Porthos wept; Aramis pointed towards heaven; Athos made the sign of the cross.

At that moment a man appeared in the doorway, almost as pale as those in the chamber. He looked around him and saw Madame Bonacieux dead, and D'Artagnan in a swoon. He appeared just at that moment of stupor which follows great catastrophes.

"I was not deceived," said he; "here is M. d'Artagnan; and you are his friends, MM. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis."

The persons whose names were thus pronounced looked at the stranger with astonishment. It seemed to all three that they knew him.

"Gentlemen," resumed the new-comer, "you are, as I am, in search of a woman who," added he, with a terrible smile, "must have passed this way, for I see a corpse."

The three friends remained mute, — for although the voice as well as the countenance reminded them of some one they had seen, they could not remember under what circumstances.

"Gentlemen," continued the stranger, "since you do not recognize a man who probably owes his life to you twice, I must name myself. I am Lord de Winter, brother-in-law of *that woman*."

The three friends uttered a cry of surprise.

Athos rose, and offering him his hand, "Be welcome, my Lord," said he, "you are one of us."

"I set out five hours after her from Portsmouth," said Lord de Winter. "I arrived three hours after her at Boulogne. I missed her by twenty minutes at St. Omer. Finally, at Lilliers I lost all trace of her. I was going about at random, inquiring of everybody, when I saw you

pace with yours. And yet it a
diligence, you have arrived too

"You see!" said Athos, poin
dead, and to D'Artagnan, whom
trying to recall to life.

"Are they both dead?" asked

"No," replied Athos, "fortun
only fainted."

"Ah, indeed, so much the
Winter.

At that moment D'Artagnan op
himself from the arms of Porthos
himself like a madman on the corp

Athos rose, walked towards his
solemn step, embraced him tenderl
violent sobs, he said to him with h
voice, "Friend, be a man! Wom
men avenge them!"

"Oh, yes!" cried D'Artagnan, "
her, I am ready to follow you."

Athos profited by this moment
hope of vengeance restored to his
make a sign to Porthos and Aran
superior.

The two [illegible]

before being an angel in heaven. Treat her as one of your sisters. We will return some day to pray over her grave."

D'Artagnan concealed his face in the bosom of Athos, and sobbed aloud.

"Weep," said Athos, "weep, heart full of love, youth, and life! Alas, would I could weep like you!"

And he drew away his friend, as affectionate as a father, as consoling as a priest, noble as a man who has suffered much.

All five, followed by their lackeys leading their horses, took their way to the town of Béthune, whose outskirts they perceived, and stopped before the first inn they came to.

"But," said D'Artagnan, "shall we not pursue that woman?"

"Later," said Athos. "I have measures to take."

"She will escape us," replied the young man; "she will escape us, and it will be your fault, Athos."

"I will be accountable for her," said Athos.

D'Artagnan had so much confidence in the word of his friend that he lowered his head, and entered the inn without reply.

Porthos and Aramis regarded each other, not understanding this assurance of Athos.

Lord de Winter believed he spoke in this manner to soothe the grief of D'Artagnan.

"Now, gentlemen," said Athos, when he had ascertained there were five chambers free in the hôtel, "let every one retire to his own apartment. D'Artagnan needs to be alone, to weep and to sleep. I take charge of everything; be easy."

"It appears, however," said Lord de Winter, "if there are any measures to take against the countess, it concerns me; she is my sister-in-law."

Porthos and Aramis looked at e
Lord de Winter thought Athos w

"Now, retire to your chamb
leave me to act. You must perc
of a husband this concerns me. (
have not lost it, give me the pap
man's hat, upon which is written
of—"

"Ah," said D'Artagnan, "I co
written in her hand."

"You see, then," said Athos, "th
still!"

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE MAN IN THE RED CLOAK.

The despair of Athos had given place to a concentrated grief which only rendered more lucid the brilliant mental faculties of that extraordinary man.

Possessed by one single thought, — that of the promise he had made, and of the responsibility he had taken, — he retired last to his chamber, begged the host to procure him a map of the province, bent over it, examined every line traced upon it, perceived that there were four different roads from Béthune to Armentières, and summoned the lackeys.

Planchet, Grimaud, Bazin, and Mousqueton presented themselves, and received clear, positive, and serious orders from Athos.

They must set out the next morning at daybreak, and go to Armentières, — each by a different route. Planchet, the most intelligent of the four, was to follow that by which the carriage had gone upon which the four friends had fired, and which was accompanied, as may be remembered, by Rochefort's servant.

Athos set the lackeys to work first because, since these men had been in the service of himself and his friends he had discovered in each of them different and essential qualities. Then, lackeys who ask questions inspire less mistrust than masters, and meet with more sympathy among those to whom they address themselves. Besides, Milady

order to inform Athos and serve as a
friends. These arrangements made, the

Athos then arose from his chair, gird
enveloped himself in his cloak, and left
nearly ten o'clock. At ten o'clock in t
well known, the streets in provincial to
frequented. Athos nevertheless was v
find some one of whom he could ask
length he met a belated passenger, we
spoke a few words to him. The man
coiled with terror, and only answered
the musketeer by pointing. Athos offe
a pistole to accompany him, but the n

Athos then plunged into the street
cated with his finger; but arriving at f
stopped again, visibly embarrassed. N
cross-roads offered him a better chan
place of meeting somebody, he stood sti
utes a night-watch passed. Athos re
same question he had asked the first pe
night-watch evinced the same terror, n
to accompany Athos, and only pointed
the road he was to take.

Athos walked in the direction indi
the suburb situated at the opposite ex

Athos to ask charity, Athos offered him half a crown to accompany him where he was going. The mendicant hesitated at first, but at the sight of the piece of silver which shone in the darkness he consented, and walked on before Athos.

Arrived at the angle of a street, he pointed to a small house, isolated, solitary, and dismal. Athos went towards the house, while the mendicant, who had received his reward, left as fast as his legs could carry him.

Athos went round the house before he could distinguish the door, amid the red color in which the house was painted. No light appeared through the chinks of the shutters; no noise gave reason to believe that it was inhabited. It was dark and silent as the tomb.

Three times Athos knocked without receiving an answer. At the third knock, however, steps were heard inside. The door at length was opened, and a man appeared, of high stature, pale complexion, and black hair and beard.

Athos and he exchanged some words in a low voice; then the tall man made a sign to the musketeer that he might come in. Athos immediately profited by the permission, and the door was closed behind him.

The man whom Athos had come so far to seek, and whom he had found with so much trouble, introduced him into his laboratory, where he was engaged in fastening together with iron wire the dry bones of a skeleton. All the frame was adjusted except the head, which lay on the table.

All the rest of the furniture indicated that the dweller in this house occupied himself with the study of natural science. There were large bottles filled with serpents, ticketed according to their species; dried lizards shone like emeralds set in great squares of black wood, and

inhabited this house.

Athos cast a cold and indiffe
jects we have described, and
whom he came to seek sat do

Then he explained to him tl
the service he required of hin
expressed his request than the
standing before the musketeer,
terror, and refused. Then Athc
a small paper, on which two lin
panied by a signature and a seal
him who had made too prematur
nance. The tall man had scarce
the signature, and recognized the
denote that he had no longer any
that he was ready to obey.

Athos required no more. He
returned by the same way he cam
and went to his apartment.

At daybreak D'Artagnan ente
demanded what was to be done.

"To wait," replied Athos.

Some minutes after, the super
to inform the musketeers that
place at mid-day. As to "

friends repaired to the convent; the bells tolled, the chapel was open, the grating of the choir was closed. In the middle of the choir the body of the victim, clothed in her novitiate dress, was exposed. On each side of the choir and behind the gratings opening into the convent, was assembled the whole community of the Carmelites, who listened to the divine service, and mingled their chant with the chant of the priests, without seeing the profane, or being seen by them.

At the door of the chapel D'Artagnan felt his courage fail anew, and returned to look for Athos; but Athos had disappeared.

Faithful to his mission of vengeance, Athos had requested to be conducted to the garden; and there upon the sand, following the light steps of this woman, who left sharp tracks wherever she went, he advanced towards the gate which led into the wood, and causing it to be opened, he went out into the forest.

Then all his suspicions were confirmed; the road by which the carriage had disappeared encircled the forest. Athos followed the road for some time, his eyes fixed upon the ground; slight stains of blood, which came from the wound inflicted upon the man who accompanied the carriage as a courier, or from one of the horses, dotted the road. At the end of three-quarters of a league, within fifty paces of Festubert, a larger blood-stain appeared; the ground was trampled by horses. Between the forest and this accursed spot, a little behind the trampled ground, was the same track of small feet as in the garden; the carriage had stopped here. At this spot Milady had come out of the wood, and entered the carriage.

Satisfied with this discovery which confirmed all his suspicions, Athos returned to the hôtel, and found Planchet impatiently waiting for him.

tion that the evening before, at half-
man who accompanied a lady travel
had been obliged to stop, unable to
dent was set down to the account
stopped the chaise in the wood. T
the village; the woman had had a
continued her journey.

Planchet went in search of the pos
her, and found him. He had taken
melles; and from Fromelles she ha
ères. Planchet took the cross-road,
in the morning he was at Armenti

There was but one tavern, the
and presented himself as a lackey ou
in search of a situation. He had no
with the people of the tavern befo
woman had come there alone abou
night before, had engaged a chamb
master of the hôtel, and told him s
some time in the neighborhood.

Planchet had no need to learn m
the rendezvous, found the lackeys
them as sentinels at all the outlets o
to find Athos, who had just received t

"To wait!" replied Athos.

Each retired to his own apartment.

At eight o'clock in the evening Athos ordered the horses to be saddled, and had Lord de Winter and his friends notified that they must prepare for the expedition.

In an instant all five were ready. Each examined his arms, and put them in order. Athos came down last, and found D'Artagnan already on horseback, and growing impatient.

"Patience!" cried Athos; "one of our party is still wanting."

The four horsemen looked round them with astonishment, for they sought vainly in their minds to know who this other person could be.

At this moment Planchet brought out Athos's horse, the musketeer leaped lightly into the saddle.

"Wait for me," cried he, "I will soon be back," and he set off at a gallop.

In a quarter of an hour he returned, accompanied by a tall man, masked, and wrapped in a large red cloak.

Lord de Winter and the three musketeers looked at one another inquiringly. Neither could give the others any information, for all were ignorant who this man could be; nevertheless, they felt convinced that all was as it should be, as it was done by the order of Athos.

At nine o'clock, guided by Planchet, the little cavalcade set out, taking the route the carriage had taken.

It was a melancholy sight, — that of these six men, travelling in silence, each plunged in his own thoughts, sad as despair, gloomy as chastisement.

It was a stormy and dark night; vas
heavens, concealing the stars; the m
till midnight.

Occasionally, by the light of a flash
gleamed along the horizon, the road s
them, white and solitary; the flash e
in darkness.

Every minute Athos was forced to r
constantly in advance of the little tr
to keep in the line, which in an instar
from. He had but one thought, — to
went.

They passed in silence through t
Festubert, where the wounded serv
skirted the wood of Richebourg. A
who led the column, turned to the
Several times Lord de Winter, Port
to talk with the man in the red cloak
rogation which they put to him he
sponse. The travellers then compr
must be some reason why the unknow
silence, and ceased to address themsel
The storm increased, the flashes su

The cavalcade trotted on more sharply.

A little before they came to Fromelles the storm burst. They spread their cloaks. There remained three leagues to travel, and they did it amid torrents of rain.

D'Artagnan took off his hat, and could not be persuaded to make use of his cloak. He found pleasure in feeling the water trickle over his burning brow and over his body, agitated by feverish shudders.

The moment the little troop passed Goskal and were approaching the Post, a man sheltered beneath a tree detached himself from the trunk with which he had been confounded in the darkness, and advanced into the middle of the road, putting his finger on his lips.

Athos recognized Grimaud.

"What 's the matter?" cried Athos. "Has she left Armentieres?"

Grimaud made a sign in the affirmative. D'Artagnan ground his teeth.

"Silence, D'Artagnan!" said Athos. "I have charged myself with this affair. It is for me, then, to interrogate Grimaud."

"Where is she?" asked Athos.

Grimaud extended his hands in the direction of the Lys.

"Far from here?" asked Athos.

Grimaud showed his master his forefinger bent.

"Alone?" asked Athos.

Grimaud made the sign yes.

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "she is alone, within half a league of us, in the direction of the river."

"That 's well," said D'Artagnan. "Lead us, Grimaud."

Grimaud took his course across the country, and acted as guide to the cavalcade.

At the end of five hundred paces, more or less, they came to a rivulet which they forded.

"Silence, then!" cried A

And the troop continued

Another flash illuminate
extended his arm, and by t
serpent they distinguished
banks of the river, within a

One window was lighted.

"Here we are!" said Ath

At this moment a man
a ditch jumped up and ca
Mousqueton. He pointed hi

"She is there," said he.

"And Bazin?" asked Ath

"While I watched the win

"Good!" said Athos. "
servants."

Athos sprang from his horse
and advanced towards the w
sign to the rest of the troop t

The little house was sur
hedge, two or three feet hig
hedge and went up to the
shutters, but had the half-curt

He mounted the skirting-st
over the

smile passed over the lips of Athos. He was not deceived; it was she whom he sought.

At this moment a horse neighed. Milady raised her head, saw close to the panes the pale face of Athos, and screamed.

Athos, perceiving that she knew him, pushed the window with his knee and hand. The window yielded. The squares were broken to shivers; and Athos, like the spectre of vengeance, leaped into the room.

Milady rushed to the door and opened it. More pale and menacing than Athos, D'Artagnan stood on the threshold.

Milady recoiled, uttering a cry. D'Artagnan, believing she might have means of flight and fearing she should escape, drew a pistol from his belt; but Athos raised his hand.

"Put back that weapon, D'Artagnan!" said he; "this woman must be tried, not assassinated. Wait an instant, my friend, and you shall be satisfied. Come in, gentlemen."

D'Artagnan obeyed; for Athos had the solemn voice and the powerful gesture of a judge sent by the Lord himself. Behind D'Artagnan entered Porthos, Aramis, Lord de Winter, and the man in the red cloak.

The four lackeys guarded the door and the window.

Milady had sunk into a chair, with her hands extended, as if to conjure this terrible apparition. Perceiving her brother-in-law, she uttered a terrible cry.

"What do you want?" screamed Milady.

"We want," said Athos, "Charlotte Backson, who first was called Comtesse de la Fère, and afterwards Milady de Winter, Baroness of Sheffield."

"That is I! that is I!" murmured Milady, in extreme terror; "what do you want?"

D'Artagnan advanced.

"Before God and before
woman of having poisoned
died yesterday evening."

He turned towards Portho

"We bear witness to thi
with one voice.

D'Artagnan continued: "
I accuse this woman of havi
in wine which she sent me
letter, as if that wine came
served me, but a man nam
place."

"We bear witness to this,'
in the same manner as befor

"Before God and before me
having urged me to the murde
but as no one else can attest t
I attest it myself. I have
passed to the other side of t
Aramis.

"Your turn, my Lord," said

The baron came forward.

"Before God and before me
woman of having

arrested, and gave her in charge to a loyal servant. She corrupted this man; she placed the poniard in his hand; she made him kill the duke. And at this moment, perhaps, Felton is paying with his head for the crime of this fury!"

A shudder crept through the judges at the revelation of these unknown crimes.

"That is not all," resumed Lord de Winter. "My brother, who made you his heir, died in three hours of a strange disorder which left livid traces all over the body. My sister, how did your husband die?"

"Horror!" cried Porthos and Aramis.

"Assassin of Buckingham, assassin of Felton, assassin of my brother, I demand justice upon you, and I swear that if it be not granted to me, I will execute it myself."

And Lord de Winter ranged himself by the side of D'Artagnan, leaving the place free for another accuser.

Milady let her head sink between her two hands, and tried to recall her ideas, whirling in a mortal vertigo.

"My turn," said Athos, himself trembling as the lion trembles at the sight of the serpent, — "my turn. I married that woman when she was a young girl; I married her in opposition to the wishes of all my family; I gave her my wealth, I gave her my name; and one day I discovered that this woman was branded, — this woman was marked with a *fleur-de-lis* on her left shoulder."

"Oh," said Milady, raising herself, "I defy you to find any tribunal which pronounced that infamous sentence against me. I defy you to find him who executed it."

"Silence!" said a hollow voice. "It is for me to reply to that!" And the man in the red cloak came forward in his turn.

"What man is that? What man is that?" cried Mi-

upon Athos he was unknown.

Even Athos looked at him v
the others, for he knew not ho
himself mixed up with the hor

After approaching Milady w
so that the table alone separate
off his mask.

Milady for some time exam
that pale face, enframed with b
only expression of which was ic
suddenly cried, "Oh, no, no!
the very wall. "No, no! it
It is not he! Help, help!"
wards the wall, as if she wou
her hands.

"Who are you, then?" cried
scene.

"Ask that woman," said th
"for you may plainly see she

"The executioner of Lille, th
cried Milady, a prey to insensate
her hands to the wall to avoid fa

Every one drew back, and tl
remained standing alone in the

"Oh, grace, grace, pardon!"

"That woman was once a young girl, as beautiful as she is to-day. She was a nun in the convent of the Benedictines of Templemar. A young priest, with a simple and trustful heart, performed the duties of the church of that convent. She undertook his seduction, and succeeded; she would have seduced a saint.

"Their vows were sacred and irrevocable. Their connection could not last long without ruining both. She prevailed upon him to leave the country; but to leave the country, to fly together, to reach another part of France, where they might live at ease because unknown, money was necessary. Neither had any. The priest stole the sacred vases, and sold them; but as they were preparing to escape together, they were both arrested.

"Eight days later she had seduced the son of the jailer, and escaped. The young priest was condemned to ten years of imprisonment, and to be branded. I was executioner of the city of Lille, as this woman has said. I was obliged to brand the guilty one; and he, gentlemen, was my brother!

"I then swore that this woman who had ruined him, who was more than his accomplice, since she had urged him to the crime, should at least share his punishment. I suspected where she was concealed. I followed her, I caught her, I bound her; and I imprinted the same disgraceful mark upon her that I had imprinted upon my poor brother.

"The day after my return to Lille, my brother in his turn succeeded in making his escape; I was accused of complicity, and was condemned to remain in his place till he should be again a prisoner. My poor brother was ignorant of this sentence. He rejoined this woman; they fled together into Berry, and there he obtained a little curacy. This woman passed for his sister.

enamoured of her, — amorou
proposed to marry her. The
ruined for him she was desti
Comtesse de la Fère — "

All eyes were turned towar
that was, and who made a sign
true which the executioner had

"Then," resumed he, "mad,
get rid of an existence from wh
thing, honor and happiness, my
Lille, and learning the sentence
in his place, surrendered himsel
same night from the iron bar
prison.

"To do justice to them who h
kept their word. As soon as the
was proved, I was set at liberty.

"That is the crime of which
cause for which she was branded."

"M. d'Artagnan," said Athos,
you demand against this woman

"The punishment of death," re

"My Lord de Winter," continu
penalty you demand against this w

"The punishm

Athos stretched out his hand towards her.

"Charlotte Backson, Comtesse de la Fère, Milady de Winter," said he, "your crimes have wearied men on earth and God in heaven. If you know a prayer, say it, — for you are condemned, and you shall die."

At these words, which left no hope, Milady raised herself in all her pride, and wished to speak; but her strength failed her. She felt that a powerful and implacable hand seized her by the hair, and dragged her away as irrevocably as fatality drags humanity. She did not, therefore, even attempt the least resistance, and went out of the cottage.

Lord de Winter, D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, went out close behind her. The lackeys followed their masters, and the chamber was left solitary, with its broken window, its open door, and its smoky lamp burning sadly on the table.

It was near midnight; the moon, less
and reddened by the last traces of the
the little town of Armentières, which
pale light the dark outline of its hous
of its high belfry. In front of them
waters like a river of molten tin; wh
was a black mass of trees, profiled o
vaded by large coppery clouds whicl
twilight amid the night. On the le
doned mill, with its motionless wing
which an owl threw out its shrill, pe
onous cry. On the right and on th
which the dismal procession pursued,
stunted trees, which looked like deform
down to watch men travelling at this

From time to time a broad sheet
the horizon in its whole width, darted
the black mass of trees, and like a
vided the heavens and the waters int
breath of wind now disturbed the he
death-like silence oppressed all nat
humid and glittering with the rain

Winter, D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis, walked behind the executioner. Planchet and Bazin came last.

The two lackeys conducted Milady to the bank of the river. Her mouth was mute; but her eyes spoke with their inexpressible eloquence, supplicating by turns each of those on whom she looked.

Being a few paces in advance she whispered to the lackeys, "A thousand pistoles to each of you, if you will assist my escape; but if you deliver me up to your masters, I have near at hand avengers who will make you pay dearly for my death."

Grimaud hesitated. Mousqueton trembled in all his members.

Athos, who heard Milady's voice, came sharply up. Lord de Winter did the same.

"Change these lackeys," said he; "she has spoken to them. They are no longer sure."

Planchet and Bazin were called, and took the places of Grimaud and Mousqueton.

On the bank of the river the executioner approached Milady, and bound her hands and feet.

Then she broke the silence to cry out, "You are cowards, miserable assassins, — ten men combined to murder one woman. Beware! If I am not saved I shall be avenged."

"You are not a woman," said Athos, coldly and sternly. "You do not belong to the human species; you are a demon escaped from hell, whither we send you back again."

"Ah, you virtuous men!" said Milady; "please to remember that he who shall touch a hair of my head is himself an assassin."

"The executioner may kill, without being on that account an assassin," said the man in the red cloak, rapping upon his immense sword. "This is the last judge; that is all. *Nachrichter*, as say our neighbors, the Germans."

accuse me of," shrieked Milady,
bunal. You are not judges! You
"I offered you Tyburn," said L
did you not accept it?"
"Because I am not willing
struggling. "Because I am too
"The woman you poisoned at B
than you, Madame, and yet she is
"I will enter a cloister; I w
Milady.
"You were in a cloister," sai
you left it to ruin my brother."
Milady uttered a cry of terror a
The executioner took her up in h
her towards the boat.
"Oh, my God!" cried she, "
to drown me?"
These cries had something so h
M. d'Artagnan, who had been a
pursuit of Milady, sat down on t
hung his head, covering his ear
hands; and yet, notwithstanding
cry and threaten.
D'Artagnan was the youngest
heart failed him.

"D'Artagnan, D'Artagnan!" cried she; "remember that I loved you!"

The young man rose and took a step towards her.

But Athos arose likewise, drew his sword, and placed himself in the way.

"If you take one step farther, D'Artagnan," said he, "we shall cross swords together."

D'Artagnan sank on his knees and prayed.

"Come," continued Athos, "executioner, do your duty."

"Willingly, Monseigneur," said the executioner; "for as I am a good Catholic, I firmly believe I am acting justly in performing my functions on this woman."

"That 's well."

Athos made a step towards Milady.

"I pardon you," said he, "the ill you have done me. I pardon you for my blasted future, my lost honor, my defiled love, and my salvation forever compromised by the despair into which you have cast me. Die in peace!"

Lord de Winter advanced in his turn.

"I pardon you," said he, "for the poisoning of my brother, and the assassination of his Grace, Lord Buckingham. I pardon you for the death of poor Felton; I pardon you the attempts upon my own person. Die in peace!"

"And I," said M. d'Artagnan. "Pardon me, Madame, for having by a trick unworthy of a gentleman provoked your anger; and I, in exchange, pardon you the murder of my poor love and your cruel vengeance against me. I pardon you, and I weep for you. Die in peace!"

"I am lost!" murmured Milady in English. "I must die!"

Then she arose of herself, and cast around her one of those piercing looks which seemed to dart from an eye of flame.

"Here, said he, is the price o
may be plain we act as judges."

"That is correct," said the execu
her turn, let this woman see that I
trade, but my debt."

And he threw the money into the

The boat moved off towards the l
Lys, bearing the guilty woman and
the others remained on the right-ha
fell on their knees.

The boat glided along the ferry-r
of a pale cloud which hung ove
moment.

The troop of friends saw it gain t
figures were defined like black shad
horizon.

Milady during the passage had c
cord which fastened her feet. On c
she jumped lightly on shore and t
soil was moist; on reaching the
slipped and fell upon her knees.

She was struck, no doubt, with a
conceived that Heaven denied its ai
the attitude in which she had fall
and her hands clasped.

cry of the victim, then a truncated mass sank beneath the blow.

The executioner then took off his red cloak, spread it upon the ground, laid the body in it, threw in the head, tied all up by the four corners, lifted it on his back, and entered the boat again.

In the middle of the stream he stopped the boat, and suspending his burden over the water cried in a loud voice, "Let the justice of God be done!" And he let the corpse drop into the depths of the waters, which closed over it.

Three days afterwards the four musketeers were in Paris; they had not exceeded their leave of absence, and that same evening they went to pay their customary visit to M. de Tréville.

"Well, gentlemen," said the brave captain, "I hope you have been well amused during your excursion."

"Prodigiously," replied Athos in the name of himself and his comrades.

# CHAPTER XXX\

## THE CARDINAL'S MESSE

On the sixth of the following mont
pliance with the promise he had m
return to Rochelle, left his capital st
the news which began to spread its
assassination.

Although warned that the man she
was in great danger, the queen, whe
nounced to her, would not believe
imprudently exclaimed, "It is false;
to me!"

But the next day she was obliged
intelligence; Laporte, detained in E
else had been, by the orders of Ch
was the bearer of the duke's dying gi

The joy of the king was lively.
himself the trouble to dissemble, ar
affectation before the queen. Lou
weak mind, was wanting in generos

But the king soon again became
his brow was not one of those that lo
felt that in returning to camp he sho

The return to Rochelle, therefore, was profoundly dull. Our four friends, in particular, astonished their comrades; they travelled together, side by side, with sad eyes and heads lowered. Athos alone from time to time raised his expansive brow; a flash kindled in his eyes, and a bitter smile passed over his lips, then, like his comrades, he sank again into reverie.

As soon as the escort arrived in a city, when they had conducted the king to his quarters the four friends either retired to their own or to some secluded cabaret, where they neither drank nor played; they only conversed in a low voice, looking around attentively to see that no one overheard them.

One day, when the king had halted to fly the magpie, and the four friends, according to their custom, instead of following the sport had stopped at a cabaret on the high-road, a man coming from Rochelle on horseback pulled up at the door to drink a glass of wine, and darted a searching glance into the room where the four musketeers were sitting.

"Holloa, M. d'Artagnan!" said he, "is not that you whom I see yonder?"

D'Artagnan raised his head and uttered a cry of joy. It was the man he called his phantom; it was his unknown of Meung, of the Rue des Fossoyeurs and of Arras.

D'Artagnan drew his sword, and sprang towards the door.

But this time, instead of avoiding him the unknown jumped from his horse, and advanced to meet D'Artagnan.

"Ah, Monsieur!" said the young man, "I meet you, then, at last! This time you shall not escape me!"

"Neither is it my intention, Monsieur, for this time I was seeking you; in the name of the king, I arrest you."

"How! what do you say?" cried D'Artagnan.

"I say that you must surrender your sword to me, Monsieur, and that without resistance. This concerns your head, I warn you."

"Who are you, then?" demanded D'Artagnan, lowering the point of his sword, but without yet surrendering it.

"I am the Chevalier le Rochefort," answered the other, "the equerry of M. le Cardinal Richelieu, and I have orders to conduct you to his Eminence."

"We are returning to his Eminence, Monsieur the Chevalier," said Athos, advancing; "and you will please to accept the word of M. d'Artagnan that he will go straight to Rochelle."

"I must place him in the hands of guards who will take him into camp."

"We will be his guards, Monsieur, upon our word as gentlemen; but likewise, upon our word as gentlemen," added Athos, knitting his brow, "M. d'Artagnan shall not leave us."

The Chevalier de Rochefort cast a glance backwards, and

"Return to camp and you shall know."

Rochefort remained for a moment in thought; then, as they were only a day's journey from Surgères, whither the cardinal was to come to meet the king, he resolved to follow the advice of Athos, and go with them. Besides, this return offered him the advantage of watching his prisoner.

They resumed their route.

On the morrow, at three o'clock in the afternoon, they arrived at Surgères. The cardinal there awaited Louis XIII. The minister and the king exchanged numerous caresses, felicitating each other upon the fortunate chance which had freed France from the inveterate enemy who set all Europe against her. After which, the cardinal, who had been informed that D'Artagnan was arrested, and who was anxious to see him, took leave of the king, inviting him to come the next day to view the work already done upon the dike.

On returning in the evening to his quarters at the bridge of La Pierre, the cardinal found, standing before the house he occupied, D'Artagnan, without his sword, and the three musketeers armed.

This time, as he was well attended, he looked at them sternly, and made a sign with his eye and hand for D'Artagnan to follow him.

D'Artagnan obeyed.

"We shall wait for you, D'Artagnan," said Athos, loud enough for the cardinal to hear him.

His Eminence bent his brow, stopped for an instant, and then kept on his way without uttering a single word.

D'Artagnan entered after the cardinal, and behind D'Artagnan the door was guarded.

His Eminence entered the chamber which served him

D'Artagnan remained alone i
this was his second interview
afterwards confessed that he fe
be his last.

Richelieu remained standing, l
tel-piece ; a table was between hi

" Monsieur," said the cardinal,
by my orders."

" So they tell me, Monseigneur.

" Do you know why ? "

" No, Monseigneur, for the only
be arrested is still unknown to you

Richelieu looked steadfastly at t

" Holloa ! " said he, " what does

" If Monseigneur will have the
the first place, what crimes are imp
tell him the deeds I have really do

" Crimes are imputed to you whi
far loftier heads than yours, Monsie

" What, Monseigneur ? " said D'A
ness which astonished the cardinal

" You are charged with having
enemies of the kingdom ; you are
surprised State secrets ; you are cha
to thwart

"What do you say, Monsieur?" cried the cardinal, astonished; "and of what woman are you speaking thus?"

"Of Milady de Winter," replied D'Artagnan, — "yes, of Milady de Winter, of whose crimes your Eminence is doubtless ignorant, since you have honored her with your confidence."

"Monsieur," said the cardinal, "if Milady de Winter has committed the crimes you lay to her charge, she shall be punished."

"She is punished, Monseigneur."

"And who has punished her?"

"We."

"She is in prison?"

"She is dead."

"Dead!" repeated the cardinal, who could not believe what he heard, — "dead! Did you not say she was dead?"

"Three times she attempted to kill me, and I pardoned her; but she murdered the woman I loved. Then my friends and I took her, tried her, and condemned her."

D'Artagnan then related the poisoning of Madame Bonacieux in the convent of the Carmelites at Béthune, the trial in the isolated house, and the execution on the banks of the Lys.

A shudder crept through the body of the cardinal, who did not shudder readily.

But all at once, as if undergoing the influence of an unspoken thought, the countenance of the cardinal, till then gloomy, cleared up by degrees, and recovered perfect serenity.

"So," said the cardinal, in a tone that contrasted strongly with the severity of his words, "you have constituted yourselves judges, without remembering that they who punish without license to punish are assassins?"

Monseigneur, I swear to you that I never for an instant

to be afraid of death."

"Yes, I know you are a man of a
said the cardinal, with a voice almo
therefore tell you beforehand you a
condemned."

"Another might reply to your E
his pardon in his pocket. I content
Command, Monseigneur; I am rea

"Your pardon?" said Richelieu, a

"Yes, Monseigneur," said D'Artag

"And signed by whom, — by th
cardinal pronounced these words wit
sion of contempt.

"No, by your Eminence."

"By me? You are insane, Monsie

"Monseigneur will doubtless recog
writing."

And D'Artagnan presented to the c
piece of paper which Athos had force
which he had given to D'Artagnan
safeguard.

His Eminence took the paper, and
dwelling upon every syllable: —

*The Cardinal gives D'Artagnan a Lieutenant's Commission.*

cause me to die," said the Gascon to himself. "Well, my faith! he shall see how a gentleman can die."

The young musketeer was in excellent disposition to die heroically.

Richelieu still continued thinking, rolling and unrolling the paper in his hands.

At length he raised his head, fixed his eagle look upon that loyal, open, and intelligent countenance, read upon that face, furrowed with tears, all the sufferings its possessor had endured in the course of a month, and reflected for the third or fourth time how much there was in that youth of twenty-one years before him, and what resources his activity, his courage, and his shrewdness might offer to a good master. On the other side, the crimes, the power, and the infernal genius of Milady had more than once terrified him. He felt something like a secret joy at being forever relieved of this dangerous accomplice.

Richelieu slowly tore the paper which D'Artagnan had generously relinquished.

"I am lost!" said D'Artagnan to himself. And he bowed profoundly before the cardinal, like a man who says, "Lord, thy will be done!"

The cardinal approached the table, and without sitting down, wrote a few lines upon a parchment of which two-thirds were already filled, and affixed his seal.

"That is my condemnation," thought D'Artagnan; "he will spare me the *ennui* of the Bastille, or the tediousness of a trial. That's very kind of him."

"Here, Monsieur," said the cardinal to the young man. "I have taken from you one *carte blanche* to give you another. The name is wanting in this commission; you can write it yourself."

D'Artagnan took the paper hesitatingly, and cast his eyes over it; it was a lieutenant's commission in the Musketeers.

worthy —

"You are a brave youth, D'Art
cardinal, tapping him familiarly or
at having vanquished this rebelli
this commission what you will;
the name be blank, it is to you

"I shall never forget it," replie
Eminence may be certain of that

The cardinal turned, and said in
fort!" The chevalier, who no d
entered immediately.

"Rochefort," said the cardinal, "
I receive him among the number
each other, then; and be wise if
your heads."

Rochefort and D'Artagnan coolly
their lips; but the cardinal was
with his vigilant eye.

They left the chamber at the sa

"We shall meet again, shall we

"When you please," said D'Arta

"An opportunity will come," re

"Hey?" said the cardinal, openi

The two men smiled at each o
saluted his Eminence.

the quarters of Athos, whom he found in a fair way to empty a bottle of Spanish wine, — an occupation which he religiously accomplished every night.

D'Artagnan related what had taken place between the cardinal and himself, and drawing the commission from his pocket, said, "Here, my dear Athos, this naturally belongs to you."

Athos smiled with one of his sweet and expressive smiles.

"Friend," said he, "for Athos this is too much; for the Comte de la Fère it is too little. Keep the commission; it is yours. Alas! you have purchased it dearly enough."

D'Artagnan left Athos's chamber and went to that of Porthos. He found him clothed in a magnificent dress covered with splendid embroidery, admiring himself before a glass.

"Ah, ah! is that you, dear friend?" exclaimed Porthos. "How do you think these garments fit me?"

"Wonderfully," said D'Artagnan; "but I come to offer you a dress which will become you still better."

"What?" asked Porthos.

"That of a lieutenant of Musketeers."

D'Artagnan related to Porthos the substance of his interview with the cardinal, and said, taking the commission from his pocket, "Here, my friend, write your name upon it and become my chief."

Porthos cast his eyes over the commission and returned it to D'Artagnan to the great astonishment of the young man.

"Yes," said he, — "yes, that would flatter me very much; but I should not have time enough to enjoy the distinction. During our expedition to Béthune the husband of my duchess died; so, my dear, the coffer of the defunct holding out its arms to me, I shall marry the

widow. Look here! I was trying on my wedding suit. Keep the lieutenancy, my dear, keep it."

The young man then entered the apartment of Aramis. He found him kneeling before a *priedieu*, with his head leaning on an open prayer-book.

He described to him his interview with the cardinal, and said, for the third time drawing his commission from his pocket, "You, our friend, our intelligence, our invisible protector, accept this commission. You have merited it more than any of us by your wisdom and your counsels, always followed by such happy results."

"Alas, dear friend!" said Aramis, "our late adventures have disgusted me with military life. This time my determination is irrevocably taken. After the siege I shall enter the house of the Lazarists. Keep the commission, D'Artagnan; the profession of arms suits you. You will be a brave and adventurous captain."

D'Artagnan, his eye moist with gratitude though beaming with joy, went back to Athos, whom he found still at

## EPILOGUE.

Rochelle, deprived of the assistance of the English fleet, and of the diversion promised by Buckingham, surrendered after a siege of a year. On the 28th of October, 1628, the capitulation was signed.

The king made his entrance into Paris on the 23d of December of the same year. He was received in triumph, as if he came from conquering an enemy and not Frenchmen. He entered by the Faubourg St. Jacques, under verdant arches.

D'Artagnan took possession of his command. Porthos left the service, and in the course of the following year married Madame Coquenard; the coffer so much coveted contained eight hundred thousand livres.

Mousqueton had a magnificent livery, and enjoyed the satisfaction of which he had been ambitious all his life, — that of standing behind a gilded carriage.

Aramis, after a journey into Lorraine, disappeared all at once, and ceased to write to his friends; they learned at a later period through Madame de Chevreuse, who told it to two or three of her intimates, that, yielding to his vocation, he had retired into a convent, — only into which, nobody knew.

Bazin became a lay brother.

Athos remained a musketeer under the command of D'Artagnan till the year 1633, at which period, after a journey he made to Touraine, he also quitted the service,

under the pretext of having inherited a small property in Roussillon.

Grimaud followed Athos.

D'Artagnan fought three times with Rochefort, and wounded him three times.

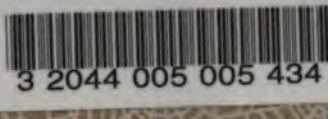
"I shall probably kill you the fourth," said he to him, holding out his hand to assist him to rise.

"It is much better both for you and for me to stop where we are," answered the wounded man. "*Corbleu!* I am more your friend than you think, — for after our very first encounter, I could by saying a word to the cardinal have had your throat cut!"

They this time embraced heartily, and without retaining any malice.

Planchet obtained from Rochefort the rank of sergeant in the Piedmont regiment.

M. Bonacieux lived on very quietly, wholly ignorant of what had become of his wife, and caring very little about it. One day he had the imprudence to recall himself to the

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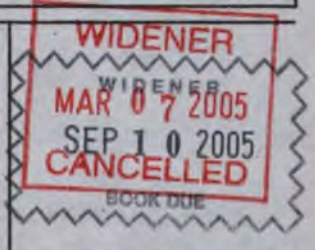


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